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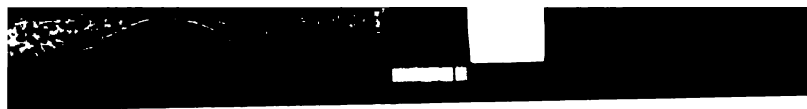




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**IN HIS OWN IMAGE**



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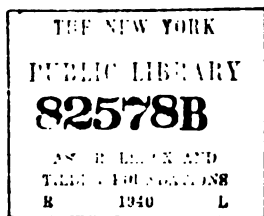
MARY BRIARLY

✓  
New York

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1921

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Romain Rolland in his Jean-Christophe says; "It is well that women should write, if they are sincere enough to describe what no man has yet seen, the depths of the soul of woman."

It is the object of this book to set forth sincerely the woman soul of the 20th. century, not by exploiting the naked emotions of one woman, but by revealing the aspirations and inhibitions of diverse women in their mating and their reaction to life.

1921



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# IN HIS OWN IMAGE

## CHAPTER I

### L. AND A. INCORPORATED

**T**HE distant humming grew more distinct. The motor thrummed, roared, set the air to throbbing above the building, then stopped short, and presently with a swift, whirring glide, the airplane swept down the broad esplanade in front of Dormitory No. 2 of the L. and A. Incorporated. Dinner had just begun and Tuesday's vegetable soup sent up reminiscent odors of onion and cabbage that carried back, not to the soil, but to countless other nourishing and monotonous meals.

L. and A. prided itself upon its nourishing food. It prided itself grudgingly upon its entire plant. The *Capitol Star* had given whole page space—for a consideration—and editorial columns from sheer good will, to "our esteemed and public-spirited fellow citizen, Bracy Landis," controlling stockholder and president of the L. and A., to whose generosity Capitol City owed these wonderful woolen mills. No other city west of the Mississippi could boast so up-to-date a plant. "It was the cleanest, most hygienic, most completely equipped . . . its paternal solicitude for its employees was an everlasting refutation of the soulless greed commonly attributed to corporations, etc."

The *Capitol Star* asserted this in flaring headlines and editorially, unchallenged by a majority of its readers, who wanted to believe that the world's industrial problem could be solved by a multiplicity of such palatial plants. The laborer was to be housed splendidly now, as the pauper and the orphan and the traveler and the schools and the legis-

latures had been housed splendidly en masse for more than a generation, to the glory of the republic.

True, there were lesser papers such as the *Communist Orator* and the *Labor Plain-Dealer*, which tried to blot out this glorious vision with a muddy stream of grievances. These papers admitted that the L. and A. was clean, was spacious, was up-to-date, but they scorned the *Star's* conclusions as to the motive actuating the owner and the desirability of his achievement. They declared acridly that the imposing buildings were merely a monumental proof of the rapacity of capital in general and Bracy Landis in particular. That what labor wanted was the power to provide its own comforts—not to have them doled out, even by a lavish hand.

As a matter of fact Capitol City was in no wise indebted to Bracy Landis for this munificent if not magnanimous enterprise. He had conducted his factory with a sole regard to what he could get out of it, until he had been driven by strikes and sundry bad fires and accidents to heed the advice of his present manager, and tear out the old fire traps.

This manager, Garth Hardwick, had brains, and such a conscience as had been contrary to the etiquette of big business before the war and its attendant labor upheavals, and was still so rare as to inspire Mr. Landis with occasional misgivings lest he was being made a fool of by his subordinate. Hardwick had issued an ultimatum three years before.

"It's no use, Mr. Landis," he had declared finally, after persuasion and complaint had failed to move his chief, "I will not try longer to keep a working force in these old shacks! It isn't human and it is poor business. You've paid out more for repairs and damages during the past five years than the whole outfit's worth, and you can't get first class workmen or turn out high grade stuff with such an equipment, no matter what wages you pay. I tell you your annual output isn't two thirds what it ought to be. Further the communist bug is spreading like the plague—secretly, among the men. I haven't the most remote idea how widespread it is or who is spotted with it, outside of a



few of the leaders. The deportations of '20 made the rank and file cautious. We don't hear so much of Bolshevism or the I. W. W., but this new and mysterious U. X. W. is growing like an invisible fungus. I tell you we are sitting on a volcano and the crust's getting so darned thin I'm blistering myself. I may be mixing my metaphors but I know what I'm talking about. You can do something or get a new manager—as you please."

Mr. Landis pleased to become sufficiently interested to ask a few questions as to what Garth Hardwick wanted done. Garth was ready.

"Put in first-class buildings and replace the older machinery with up-to-the-minute equipment, and I'll guarantee you fewer accidents and a ten per cent. increase in profits after the first two years—yes, even if the labor commission does its darndest! If you don't believe me, get an expert to overhaul the company's books and you'll be convinced."

Landis was not convinced even after the accountant had finished, but he was afraid of the menacing power of his workmen. The fear of what irresponsible brute force could do, was kept perennially fresh in the public mind by the fabled potentialities of the U. X. W. The U. X. W. never seemed to strike any definite blow—it was always about to strike—nobody knew exactly when or where or how. But there was a popular impression that the evil hour might be put off by high wages, and neat workmen's cottages with green blinds and red geraniums. The day had passed when it was a simple matter of making concessions to the union of closed or open shop. Indeed, organized labor was fast becoming a conservative force as contrasted with the rapidly multiplying radical organizations. The radicals scarcely concerned themselves now with the rights of labor. They had caught glimpses of a more enchanting prospect, a country where everything was common and every man and woman must work or go hungry. The Letvian government had already taken a census of workers and non-workers, why not these United States? The U. X. W. was popularly supposed to be working actively for this and more—how much more, no one seemed to

know. It was an undetermined force menacing the established order. Possibly only a bogey—but who could say?

Bracy Landis, afraid of this furtive power which had thrust itself into modern industrialism, yielded to his manager. After a time, savoring his enforced generosity, he gave Hardwick carte blanche to put up the latest thing in community housing in addition to the new factory buildings.

Garth Hardwick would have flatly denied that he was an idealist. He firmly believed his own argument of expediency, and joyfully set out to prepare a heaven for the working man and woman that should justify itself in terms of dividends. An offshoot of Puritan stock transplanted to Michigan, largely self-made, he had gone from mill to college and from college back to mill, worshiping the modern god, Efficiency, until he was sent to France. There he did his bit in the Argonne as a captain of infantry. He was wounded, saw men die heroically for an ideal—saw the patient sufferings of women and little children. Human beings could not be mere pawns in a game of efficiency after that. He found his god lacking. So after much meditation under both sun and stars, he breathed into it the breath of human aspiration. He decided that man could only attain the highest efficiency under the stimulus of ambition or spiritual ideals. Men must not be lumped off as units of labor, they must be encouraged to develop individual capability—their self-respect must be raised to the nth power. To accomplish this, decent, better still, æsthetic surroundings were absolutely essential.

He worked out this theory coldly but he put it into practice with a benevolence generated by the unforgotten sufferings of the war. The sweep of park with its grass and trees and flowers bordered by a paved esplanade, around which the men's and girls' dormitories, the cottages for the families, and the L. and A. gymnasium were built, was directly inspired by a dread of waste places which the rent desolation of France and Belgium had put into his soul. The airy mills, fire proof and adequately lighted, were his expiation for the needless agony he had witnessed, albeit helplessly. So he builded intelligently and enduringly

with an unacknowledged tenderness for his kind concealed beneath a cynical exterior.

It was perhaps a pity that a majority of the employees of the company had not had his enlightening experience of forsaking father and mother, a good bed, and three square meals a day, to go and fight for the freedom of the nations as he had done. Had they fought through hunger and discomfort, instead of working for their country at home bribed with hitherto undreamed of wages, cushioned by hitherto undreamed of luxuries into a disregard of the world agony, they might have appreciated the solid comfort and safety he had prepared for them.

Mr. Landis appreciated it with a groan on his return from Europe, where he had fled to be out of the way of nagging details. The editor of the *Capitol Star* appreciated it, the general public appreciated it, and manufacturers from far and near came and inspected, and shook their heads over this new pampering of labor.

The new plant attracted a better class of workmen, but this did not make it possible to discharge the incompetent. Organized labor still coddled the inefficient as a matter of principle. On the whole there was less idling and an improved morale at the L. and A., but nothing remotely resembling appreciation or gratitude among the workmen. Rather, many of them seemed to resent the possibility of such a plant. Scraps of talk floated to Garth's ears. "Holy Moses, we must be piling up the chink for Old Landis if he can afford all this!" . . . "Damn him, the old beast, lolling in his Pierce-Arrow and his kid taking our gals riding in a ten thousand dollar airplane! If labor can make such a goldarned pile, labor ought to have the stylish motors and the planes. I'm not so dead set agin' flying as you might suppose." The last speaker, an ex-farm hand who had been tempted by the high wages and attractions of the new plant, expectorated with such precision that he missed the stone coping by a hair's breadth and landed the nauseous brown liquid neatly upon a flower bed that would not betray this violation of company rules.

"Here, you, go a little slow—the boss'll fine you a buck if you go to spoiling his trimmings."

"Boss, nothin', that's just what I'm kickin' about! ' here buildin's supposed to be for us, ain't it? Then wh to hinder us from running it to suit ourselves 'stead keepin' it so's you c'n eat off'n it—heap of comfort tl is in a place as is too good to use."

A curly-headed young giant just ahead turned round these words and grinned sarcastically. "That's what been telling you, only you won't listen. This is all fine,"—he swung a beautifully muscled arm in a comprehensive gesture—"but it's not ours. It's just a soy keep the poor working man from finding out what a d fool he is to let these capitalist guys run him!"

"Oh, let up on that red flag business, Ivan,—I don't you ain't right, but it's got to be done gradoal. Y blasted old Rooshia tried makin' a clean sweep, and t didn't git nowhere."

"They didn't, eh? Much you know about it! And l sia's not America—lots of them never knew what they getting or what to do with it after they'd got it. V man, half the Russians back in my old village couldn't or write! My own dad couldn't—"

"And you've had a High School training free of ch from your Uncle Sammy. What the dickens are you ing about, Ivan?" Hardwick had come up behind unobserved and could not resist breaking in.

Ivan looked round with a quick frown at sound o boss's familiar voice. "The principal thing I'm kie about, Mr. Hardwick," he retorted, "is having a fine tleman hanging round my girl! Stick with your own l —there's plenty of them willing to give you the glad har

Garth's face reddened but his voice was control "Thank you, Ivan, you look after your affairs and I'll tend to mine."

"By hell, I mean to, Mr. Harwick, mind you, I mean t Ivan's tone was threatening.

Hardwick had walked on without replying. He had supposed his few chance courtesies to Veda Brussilov c have attracted any one's notice, much less that he aroused the jealousy of this splendid young anarchist.

encounter troubled him. It was only one of many flying straws that revealed the attitude of the men.

But if the general manager was not reaping the legitimate fruits of what he had so painstakingly sown, L. and A. Incorporated, in the person of Mr. Bracy Landis, was beginning to delight in the delicate aroma of the cup of altruism. This spectacular prodigality of expenditure had given Mr. Landis an unforeseen and pleasing publicity as a progressive and altruistic business man. He had posed for years as a *successful* business man, to which description his fellow-townsmen usually added "but rotten" under their breath. Mr. Bracy Landis was all of that. His business had not been exacting enough to keep him a man. His lithe youth had degenerated by marked stages into a gelatinous flabby middle-age. His stomach pouched, his cheeks pouched, his skin puffed out beneath his bulging eyes. He had not been gripped by an honest passion in twenty years, but he had endless appetites. To express it concisely, he was the morgue of all the decencies. During the war he had narrowly escaped some real emotion. Possibly, if he had been young enough to go or his only son, Jock, old enough he might have retained the power to feel. His wife, a blandly pretty, dressy woman, had stiffened into pathetic dignity when her two brothers fell at the front. She had died soon after. Mr. Landis had not taken his wife seriously since their honeymoon; he could hardly be expected to take her death seriously. After her demise he ate a little more, drank a little more, and spent more hours with Mademoiselle Adele by way of signifying that he felt an unaccountable vacuum somewhere.

But with the aid of the fulsome editorials of the *Capitol Star* and the laudatory articles appearing in the Eastern magazines, he had happily discovered this new appetite, an avid hunger for the approbation of his fellows. And he let Hardwick minister to this even at the expense of his pocketbook. "What if he must pay the piper? Adele cost him nearly as much—damn her!"

So Mr. Bracy Landis was reasonably willing that the soup at the L. and A. dormitories should be nourishing even

if the price of meat had never quite dropped to pre-war values.

The girls at Dormitory No. 2 were unmindful of the soup on this particular evening. They took heed only of the airplane out on the esplanade. Those at the tables near the windows craned their necks for a look, and imparted the information obtained to the more remote diners. Do not suppose this was done noisily. L. and A. Incorporated had a matron; there was also Veda Brussilov to be reckoned with. The ones who were privileged to see with their own eyes whispered to their table-mates. These, in turn, formed the words with their lips for the benefit of the next table. They also added a little local color by shrugging shoulders and waving expressive hands ceilingward, to indicate that this time "she certainly was up in G."

The entire dining room knew that it was Minette Doty again. They had not needed to be told this or that Jock Landis was at the steering gear of that plane. But they realized that some new feature of interest had been injected into the situation.

It seemed an age before the graceful craft started away, slid past the farthestmost windows and slowly rose. But Minette did not appear for several minutes. The girls attacked their roast lamb and green peas. The hive hummed once more. Suddenly the resonant ring of silver against silver, and the click of silver against good earthenware, ceased. The thud of heavy trays eased from aching arms to serving tables by the Japanese waiters, the unconscious shuffle of restless feet, a chair scraping—every vagrant sound became portentously distinct through the cessation of eating and conversation. No blare of trumpets could have more effectively summoned attention to the airy figure fluttering nonchalantly past the long line of tables.

The girl was as delicately tinted as a shell, with a tracery of violet veining visible through a skin whose velvet transparency seemed too perfect to endure. She was fragiley modeled with a score of evanescent motions of head and hands, and a swift play of expression. From her shoul-

ders to her knees hung an ermine cape and the dainty swaying folds of the ermine seemed the glorified butterfly wings of some exquisite creature but just emerged from its chrysalis. Here was a being to lure the sunshine, to lave in dew, and failing these—the poet would say, to perish. And Minette Doty had the poise and daring to soar. Her father had been a musician and her mother a movie actress. When she was eleven they had both died of the influenza within two brief days, and she had been left to be the plaything of indulgent friends until she met Veda Brussilov, who had taught her the dignity of working for her own daily bread.

To-night her mates were watching her. They had appraised, deliberated, judged, all in the brief moment before she slipped into her seat beside Veda Brussilov at the table with a last defiant flirt of her ermine tails. Not one eye of the hundred and fifty pairs in the room failed to follow her every movement till the white wing on her pert little hat merged into the row of black and brown and blonde heads by the west windows.

She appeared utterly unconscious, but she felt as if all those focussed eyes were emitting sharp steel points that pricked her. She remembered just such a sensation of stinging minute blows once back in her childhood. She had been caught out in a blizzard, and the sleet had flayed her. But she remembered also how the shock of the storm had bred in her a joyful buoyancy. She had raced into the house with the blood pounding through her arteries, fairly shouting with glee. This psychic storm assailing her to-night brought that same feeling of exuberant power. They should not beat her down; the joy within her was unconquerable!

Veda returned Minette's "Hello!" gravely, putting up her hand to readjust her heavy braids as if their weight annoyed her. The menacing silence which had heralded Minette's coming gave place to a yet more menacing babel of tongues.

"The dirty jade! and us workin' and gettin' up petitions and sendin' committees to get a law about it! And Veda her best friend, too!"

"That's just it—she thinks she can get by with anything because she is Veda's friend!"

"Veda won't stand for this after the way she's worked."

"Nope, Veda's square—she won't even spend her own money for finery, let alone bein' bought!"

"She wouldn't even take a bracelet from Ivan."

"No, the crazy nut!" The speaker was a generously proportioned blonde. "For the life of me I can't see what's the harm in acceptin' a few little remembrances from your gent'man friends."

"I should say not, Mame, and you with a box full of silk stockings tucked away in your top drawer."

"Been snoopin', eh? Thank you for your kind care. I guess I c'n buy my stockin's by the box if I wanta. Mebbe you don't know you can save a quarter a pair thataway."

"Oh, come off, Mame, you saved more'n a quarter a pair on that bunch! You needn't be scared. The legislature ain't even met up yet. Spill—who's the generous guy?"

"Well, if somebody sends you a present without any name, how you goin' to turn it down, I'd like to know. Besides, I didn't notice Miss High and Mighty Brussilov partin' with them American Beauties the boss sent her when she was sick that time in the hospital."

"Did Mr. Hardwick—Well, I like that!"

"Heck, how do you know?"

"You're just kiddin'!"

There was an unbelieving chorus. Three forks hung suspended. The processes of mastication were suddenly arrested down the entire table. One mouthful prematurely swallowed choked its victim till she had to be relieved by sundry spats on the back from her neighbor.

The blonde was enjoying herself.

"You needn't swallow it if you don't wanta. Ivan believes it all right. Dick told me him and the boss had words about it Monday."

"You don't say?"

"Can you lamp it, Veda?"

"Now look here, Mame," Connie Brown was wrathful, "you haven't got one scrap of proof of that dope—now have you?"

Mame hesitated an instant, glancing along the line to see how much backing she could depend upon.

"Have you?"

"Keep your teddy on, Con—I don't know as I'm called to tell you everything I get wise to."

"Have you?—yes or no."

"None of your business!"

"I thought as much—you're making that up out of whole cloth just to put a crimp in Veda's plans! Girls, I know where those flowers came from—any of you would, if you'd stop to use your headpieces. Helen DeWitt brought them. She has Veda up to her house a lot. Her mother's one of the head guys working for this bill. And, Mame, the next time you go to shooting off your mouth about other people's business you'd best know what you're talking about!"

The blonde was routed, but Connie Brown relapsed into a moody silence. She had defended Veda, but she did not believe that Helen DeWitt or any other woman had sent the beautiful Russian girl those American Beauty roses.

Her eyes wandered in troubled inquiry to Veda's face plainly visible some twenty feet away. Veda was listening with the absorbed attention she always gave to even the most trivial matters her mates brought to her. Her big black eyes, large irised, and wide open under delicately arched brows, gave to her face an expression of naïve wonderment curiously at variance with the keen mind and power of making quick decisions which had won for her the leadership so many of her mates envied. She had the air of looking out on a dew fresh world and finding it good.

Presently Veda raised herself a trifle in her chair. Her face irradiated and every muscle grew tense as she talked—a steady pouring stream of words. Connie could not hear what she was saying but she guessed. She settled down to her own dinner with a reassured sigh. What if Garth Hardwick had sent those flowers? Flowers and fruit and books were not taboo—only—Veda was betrothed to Ivan. And the boss did not ordinarily send American Beauties or any flowers to the sick of the L. and A. She sighed again.

From the moment that Minette Doty slipped into her seat beside her, Veda Brussilov fenced to protect her from the irritating taunts, which she knew would only make Minette utterly unmanageable. But the girl seemed determined to tempt Fate. She ostentatiously loosened the fastening of her sumptuous cape and folded it carefully over the back of her chair. She did not wait to be attacked—she moved a pawn herself.

"Keep your paws to yourself, Jess, that's the real stuff. I can't afford to have it finger-marked."

Before Jess could retort, Veda went on with her interrupted conversation. "As I was saying, girls, you must see—you must realize what this means to us working girls. It is going to give us back our very birthright. It is going to take us out of the stock of hand-me-downs that can be bought and paid for, and make us human beings with feelings to be considered. Think of the careless way men have bought and bribed our kind all these years! You can't go to a movie or a dance that you aren't looked over as if you were cheap goods on a bargain counter. Why? Because nobody's ever taken the trouble to protect us from that sort of thing—nobody will till we wake up and do it ourselves. And, girls, we've a right to be somebody. We have as much right to be respected as the wives and daughters of rich men, but we won't be till we can get a law on our side to make buying us as bad as our letting them. Most young men think it's just smart or funny now."

"Pooh," said Serena Duncan, one of the other forewomen, "even if you c'n get the bill through the legislature, it'll only be a state law. What's a piffling state? What you've got to have is a federal law—Mr. Smith explained it all to me last night. But he says the men wouldn't pay any attention to it even then. And they're the policemen and the lawyers and the judges, ain't they?"

"But it's a wedge, don't you see, Serena? It's a start. Suppose it does take years and years to get a federal amendment—suppose the men won't enforce it—it will make people think and talk. They don't take the trouble to think now—they just take it for granted because men always have paid women, they always can. And this isn't a little

back door affair, girls. The women are taking it up all over the country—there'll be bills introduced in a dozen legislatures. We won out on suffrage—why shouldn't we win out on this? Perhaps it would be like prohibition was for awhile—it did not amount to much as a law, but it did a lot to make drinking go out as a custom. You always have to educate public opinion to see the need of a reform."

"Veda, you ought to be a lawyer or a preacher instead of a shift-speeder."

"Oh, Veda won't be a forewoman always, though there are some not a thousand miles away would be glad to step into her shoes. The young boss has his eye on her," one of the other girls intervened maliciously.

Serena did not relish this belittling of forewomen. "I guess Ivan will have to do a little picketing," she sneered, "or the silk shirt will run him off the field."

Veda ignored Serena's ugly smile.

"You forget, Serena, I am betrothed to Ivan. And I have use for my tongue keeping you girls straight, Peggy."

Serena was sharp enough to seize this double opening. "Oh," she retorted with another smirk, "seems as if you was the one as was doing the forgetting, and I don't notice you succeedin none too well with the girls. You might use a little more of your gift of gab on somebody's ermine. Seems like your friends don't feel like you do 'bout taking things for their loving up—nor paying the price neither."

A suppressed titter greeted this thrust.

Before Veda could reply, Minette took up her own cudgels. Her cheeks paled a trifle beneath her rouge, and her hands trembled as she nervously crumpled a bit of bread, but her drawl was easy and irritating. The girls in No. 2 always maintained that Minette was not such a fool as she looked.

"Huh! I'm helping along the law more than any of you! I'm making you see the evil of it—I'm one awful little example! See! Why, I've made more converts to this new-fangled bill since I wore this ducky little bone of contention in here this evening"—she touched the soft fur caressingly—"than Veda'd make in a blue moon with her

preaching. You'd all vote for that law—every darned one of you, with your eyes shut, if they'd put something in to make me give this little remembrance back. Maybe I will anyway, Miss Duncan, but you'd never get it, if I did. Takes more looks than it did to make your Near-Smith cough up a chatelaine watch with your hinting!"

There was a simultaneous gasp at her audacity. Miss Duncan grew livid. For one horrid moment she merely looked, choking for words. To save her she could not think of anything sufficiently crushing to serve her need. Spluttering helplessly for some seconds, she finally tried to save her dignity by flouncing from the table. Her next neighbor picked her napkin up from the floor and shoved the vacant chair aside to give herself additional elbow room.

Veda looked troubled but said nothing. No one else cared to enter the fray. Minette stared impudently around ready to defend herself. Her gaze fell as she saw the sorrow in Veda's face. Presently some one tactfully started a discussion of shirtwaists, but the electricity was still in the air. It betrayed itself in furtive glances, in hysterical giggling over trifles.

Minette went slowly to her room after the meal was over. She spoke to no one and nobody addressed her directly. She caught several more or less veiled allusions and two open taunts, as she threaded the crowd on her way to the stairs. Her defiant buoyancy was collapsing.

L. and A. Incorporated gave the girls their choice between a small single and a large double room. Minette had elected to be alone. She shut the door after her, jerked off the offending cape and flung it on the bed. The window was open. It was mid-November. The day had been unseasonably warm and bright, but with the sundown the wind seemed to have gathered a cold chill from the snow-covered peaks above the city. It lapped up the heat from the steam radiator. It clutched at the flapping curtains. It sent a creepy draught stealing along the walls. Minette shivered and reached for the cape. Only when she had drawn it close about her, did she cease trembling. She had not thought to close the window. She had not turned on the light but an arc lamp in the park outside sent a

pale stream of brightness across the room, and the mirror on the stout oak dresser nursed it into brilliance and tossed it dazzlingly back. Minette held out her hands to the reflection as if she would warm them. And listened, and waited for Veda. It was an hour before Veda came but Minette still sat huddled on the edge of a chair; she still clasped the ermine close about her. She started as if from sleep at her friend's knock.

Veda's first move was to turn on the light, her next to close the window, then she turned and looked the girl over dispassionately. Minette stared back dumbly. Her face was very white now under the rouge. The buoyancy, the daring, were entirely gone. She was as stripped of self-assertion as a frightened child. Veda saw and partly understood. She always visualized Minette as something young and remote and infinitely desirable. There was an elusive quality in Minette's personality that invariably slipped away from Veda's affection and solicitude. Even when the girl seemed closest there was that subtle withdrawing. Veda herself was not subtle. She was forceful, direct, motherly.

She went up to Minette and put her arms firmly about her.

"Come, you are tired and cold; lie down here and I'll massage your head. Where's your hot water bottle? Wait—I'll fill it—here take off your shoes—that's better. It's too cold weather for flying—and you were not half wrapped up! That ermine's no better than paper for warmth."

She tucked her in warmly and sped down the corridor to one of the bathrooms. On her way she passed a knot of girls gossiping mysteriously. They hushed till she was out of hearing.

Returning she fussed over Minette until a slow warmth met her touch; then she sat back and waited—waited for Minette to explain. She was hungry as a mother to excuse—to forgive—to be assured that her own senses had played her false and there was nothing to forgive. Veda was ready to accept the veriest shadow of an alibi. But the girl was dumb for long disquieting minutes.

She glanced at Veda once or twice furtively. Finally, she began haltingly.

"It isn't as—as—you think, Veda, though—maybe—it's worse. Truly—" Minette raised herself on her elbow and scrutinized her friend's face avid for comprehension. "I wouldn't sell myself but—" she picked at the frivolous little black and yellow tails mechanically. "But this— isn't just togs—it's as if I wrapped his love around me, soft and warm and protecting. Of course, I know what everybody says. Jock wouldn't—I suppose he really couldn't marry a common factory girl—though I've as good blood in my veins as any old Landis can boast. But Jock isn't a Landis—he's like his mother. Old Mammy Huldah told me about her—what a real lady she was—and so generous. Jock's like that." Minette flushed as she saw Veda's glance travel involuntarily to the cape. "He'd give me the earth if I'd let him, but I've never taken even a ring till to-night. When he wrapped this round me, I couldn't seem to say no."

Minette was groping. Despite Veda's evident sympathy, she felt as if she were bruising herself in vain. Veda with her warm calm presence was like many mothers who suffer because their flesh and blood suffers, yet are unable to comprehend that suffering, and lacking this deny the only balm that could comfort.

Minette felt that Veda must understand—she saw life closing in upon her like falling walls. Jock would not be with her—she must not lose her one friend. She was fast forgetting her offense against this friend or rather it seemed trivial—a mere irritating circumstance compared with the verities of existence among which she found herself groping helplessly.

She was reaching out her soul's tentacles for something solid to adhere to. She wished Veda would come a little closer. "You love Ivan—you know how it hurts—like something growing inside that you don't know about till they tell you it's got to come out, and they tear at it, and you tear at it, till you think you've torn it out by the very roots—only you haven't! It's all there just the same. And it aches and aches till you want to go mad. You

know I wouldn't see Jock for three months and he kept waylaying me—every time I went to town or any place—and the sight of him'd make my breath come short. But I kept hoping maybe I'd get over it pretty soon. Then he got mad—I didn't see or hear from him for a month—and it got worse—the aching. Sometimes I'd go to the telephone and take down the receiver to call him up—then I'd think of you and all you'd said—I knew myself it was just plain hopeless. I'm not a fool, Veda. I give you my word I've put that receiver down twenty times and gone off and cried till my eyes got so bad I couldn't see the threads on my loom. You know I've had a lot of accidents lately. I've tried—God, I've tried more than I ever thought I could. But when he came up behind me one night—I was coming home from DeWitt's—you remember that night I took her the circulars—and Jock came up behind me and put his arms around me. I just turned round and hugged him back and sobbed and hugged him some more. It didn't seem to matter about any one else so long as he was there."

Minette glanced up piteously. Surely Veda must understand—surely she would cuddle her and sympathize. Veda was giving but a divided attention. The ecstasy of Minette's love had distracted her. It was reproaching her for the lukewarmness of her own. In Jock's place her mind pictured Ivan, handsome, domineering, heaping caresses, from which she was beginning to shrink more and more. She had been trying to hide this obtrusive fact from herself for weeks, saying she was over-tired or too much absorbed in this legislative campaign, for love-making.

She had resented Ivan's taking so lightly this reform that seemed so vital a need to her. When she went to him for sympathy or counsel, he wanted to kiss her into forgetting all about it. Garth Hardwick had given her the aid Ivan had denied her—given it eagerly, as if he thought the work were worth while—as if he thought Veda herself were worth while—not just so much warm young flesh to be kissed. But Minette wanted the kisses—wanted them though the heavens fell! Was there something wrong with her that she did not want Ivan's? She had been thrilled, she remembered, by the mere touch of his hand at first.

Ivan was so keenly alive, so strong, so magnetic. She turned back to Minette questioningly, weighing not Minette's acts but her own. The girl detected the detached unseeing quality of her gaze. It forced her back into herself more rudely than a blow. For four years past Veda had been to her not only friend and counselor, but a living proof to her untrained mind that there was a God in an ordered universe. She had received much kindness before—careless, sporadic kindness that alternated petting and chiding without apparent rhyme or reason other than the mood of the giver. Minette believed the world governed as aimlessly. She grew to womanhood with the ethical code of the family cat which avoids blows it does not understand and basks in caresses which are bestowed because of the soft feel of its fur.

Veda had plucked her from this chaos; had begun by instilling in her ordered habits of living, then had persuaded her that there was an ordered cause and effect in the world, and that the thoughts she, Minette Doty, thought and the work she Minette Doty, did, counted in the general scheme of things. The unvarying strength and goodness of the older girl persuaded her of a yet more sufficient strength and benevolence upon which Veda herself leaned. Minette had rested content to lean upon Veda. Now in her desperate need, there was neither human nor divine warmth in Veda's eyes—merely a contemplative abstraction.

Minette's body was still nestled in the ermine cape beneath the blanket Veda had spread over her. She cowered among its folds, clutching it with groping fingers, pressing her feverish palms into the caressing fur as if trying to derive a spiritual warmth from the contact.

Veda caught the reproach in her eyes—in the spasmodic shrinking, and realized vaguely what she had done.

She tried to make it good. She stooped and kissed Minette warmly. "I see," she assured her. But her words did not carry conviction. She knew in her heart that she did not see. She felt that it was beyond her powers to see. And for the moment her pain at this discovery crowded out her solicitude for her chum.

For the moment indeed, Minette no longer appeared to

her to be needing sympathy—rather she envied her for experiencing what had been denied to herself. She could not tell Minette this. She knew she was failing to take advantage of the opportunity the other had given her. She tried to put her own emotions resolutely behind her and to take up the other's burden again. It was too late; an impalpable something had come between them—Minette was once more remote.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEWITTS, PRO AND CON

**J**OHAN CAMBERWELL DEWITT was such a nice man. He was of a niceness taken in sufficiently large quantities to have proved an antidote to the most virulent form of red anarchy. His very presence betokened law and order and a due regard for the dignity and the amenities of life. He was distinguished, urbane, flawless—from his exquisitely brushed gray hair and his exquisitely clean pink skin to his perfectly polished shoes. His spats, his gold eye glass on its discreet black ribbon, the entire tout ensemble bespoke an ordered existence. He should by rights have been born in Boston. As a matter of statistics he entered the world in vulgar New York, however, be it said, on a very quiet street and in an old fashioned mansion of impeccable taste. His ancestry was also unimpeachable, individually and collectively. Boston itself could furnish no better. And if old wine has a flavor not to be found in more recent vintages, old families mellowed by centuries of refined living may have some claim to represent the flowering of civilization—the bouquet of an uninterrupted tradition of gentility. Such, indeed, was Mr. DeWitt's ineradicable belief.

Mr. DeWitt's habits were leisurely and methodical. He rose at eight. At eight forty-five precisely, he took his station behind his chair at the head of his breakfast table. He assumed that breakfast would be served at that hour and that Mrs. DeWitt would also be decorously at her place at the opposite end of the table. Such had been the custom in his father's household. True his father had been happily able to maintain a staff of servants. Mrs. DeWitt had considerable difficulty in maintaining one continuously. John Camberwell's breakfast service was no longer laid in New York. Circumstances had rather forcibly ejected

him from New York in his twenty-sixth year, when his father's death disclosed a most disconcerting shrinkage in the family assets. It became necessary for somebody to contribute to them. It being manifestly unconventional for either his mother or his ornamentally reared elder sister to do so, John Camberwell essayed the task reluctantly.

A friend of the family secured him a position in a bank in the west. The DeWitt mother and sister deplored the physical hardships he must endure in that wilderness. John Camberwell deplored the loss of his valet and the too familiar cordiality of his kind in this new environment. The intangible barrier of family which had kept the common herd at a distance in New York was no protection against humanity in the flux at Capitol City. He spurned life there for four years till the sudden death of his mother and sister within a few weeks of each other, put him in possession of a property, insignificant it is true in New York, but deemed a competence in the growing western town.

The west had become less odious after four years of unbroken association. John Camberwell was a shining proof of the power of habit—even a new habit consistently persisted in. Somewhat to his own surprise he once more embarked in a western-bound pullman. The indignity of a clerkship was no longer necessary. He opened a small stock-broker's office with some prestige because of his New York connections. When his business began to run smoothly, he decided that his duty to his race demanded that he should find a wife. On the very brink of thirty he felt himself perilously near to old bachelorhood. He had no intention of permitting so distinguished a line to perish from off the earth. He began to look about him intelligently and without haste. He was an admirable young man, no bad habits, well-bred, well-heeled—the phrase belongs to Capitol City. He attended church with becoming regularity in a Prince Albert coat and a silk hat at a time when such innovations were distinctly supererogatory in Capitol City. This unusual propriety in dress lent additional distinction to his composed clean-shaven face. St. Mary's decided that he would be an acquisition

to the vestry—he would undoubtedly look well advancing up the aisle with the offering—it seemed a pity to waste that coat. It was a happy thought. The wardens, not to be outdone, also appeared in frock coats, and the fourth vestryman went in debt to his tailor to complete the harmony. St. Mary's gained greatly in prestige from their imposing presence and the adoption of altar candles by a High Church rector.

John Camberwell's dress suit also became a desirable adjunct at social festivities which had not yet attained the dignity of functions. The unadorned youth who came to scoff at the eastern dude ended by getting dress suits also. In fact John Camberwell became the glass of fashion for this western metropolis, but it was fashion tempered by propriety—the propriety of New York of the nineties.

When Mr. DeWitt finally contracted matrimony at the age of thirty-three he committed a distinct indiscretion from his point of view. He led to the altar an impulsive, intelligent girl, fine-looking rather than beautiful, who was a radical to her finger tips.

Margaret Hartwell did not know she was a radical. She had frequently had occasion to discover that she was "out of harmony with her quorum" or, as she said when discouraged, "a square peg in a round hole." Her lady mother never understood Margaret, for which she might be pardoned since Margaret did not understand herself. Her father, while he secretly rejoiced that she had inherited his own brain, felt that some of her ideas were a little strong for a girl. Margaret was painstakingly pruned by her entire family, consisting of one brother, one married sister, and two maiden aunts. But their united efforts had not quite sufficed to fit her into her woman's sphere without friction. It remained for John Camberwell to complete the process.

Margaret had not taken his attentions seriously at first, though it was difficult to take that gentleman lightly. But her father and mother and sister and two maiden aunts took him seriously—they, it might almost have been said, embraced him seriously. Margaret found herself impelled by the gentle art of suggestion Camberwellingward. The

pressure exerted was gentle but continuous. It was worthy even of the best New York traditions. She could never quite realize how she came to accept his solitaire, but once having accepted it, she strove to be loyal to all it implied.

After two years of marriage a son was born to them. He was named Donald after his paternal grandfather. Eighteen months later a daughter came. She was christened Helen after the paternal grandmother. Margaret was too much amused at her husband's bland assumption that these were the only possible names, to do more than enter an ironical protest.

By the time she reached thirty she had grown vaguely bitter, not so much against her husband as against life. After all she could hardly blame him for being what nature and environment had made him—or hold him culpable for marrying her, however unsuitable the union was proving. Further, so far as she could determine, he was entirely satisfied with his marriage though he seemed to share the family fetich that she needed pruning.

John Camberwell's income, adequate at first, did not seem to increase materially as the years went by. But the cost of living, and the demands of Capitol City yearly becoming more opulent and metropolitan, enlarged by leaps and bounds. Margaret DeWitt had to use her ingenuity to keep up with the hospitality of her circle and to educate Donald and Helen as befitted their ancestry and position.

She was proud of the ancestry. Good blood-heredity—fine tradition appealed to something within herself, but she wore the "position" as a loosely fitting garment in spite of her husband's utmost efforts. She found the physical and mental stress of keeping up a "position" exhausting. She saw various coveted relaxations and opportunities go by because they were spending their slender margin meeting social obligations or appearing on subscription lists of doubtful usefulness.

During her early married life she tried faithfully to conform to the conventional pattern of wifely frankness and docility in her relations with her husband. She found it an arduous task. She could not help discovering that if his opinions were right, she was fundamentally wrong

in many of her conceptions of life. It was not a mere matter of acquiescence—agreement meant a wrenching loose of her mental and moral fiber. Yet it was beneath her ideal of marriage to indulge in petty argument or hostility. She found a temporary respite in silence. She withdrew into herself, but she was starved—her mind seemed to be going round and round in narrowing circles, feeding upon itself. She suffered, yet for the most part blamed herself—she was still the square peg in the round hole. So she listened to John Camberwell's recrudescence of late Victorian ideals as practiced in New York, with patience, if not with sympathy, for several years.

But when Donald and Helen reached the age of inquiry she began to take counsel with her own intelligence as to whether she were doing right to permit their personalities to be poured into the narrow mold of their father's rigid conservatism. From that time on Margaret DeWitt experimented with living and with ideas. She divorced her will and individuality from her husband's as imperceptibly and tactfully as was humanly possible—so gently that it was some years before he discovered, even partially, his loss.

But she took her own mental way questioning and doubtful till chance discovered to her a kindred soul in an old playfellow, who returned after ten years of university, medical school, hospital, and foreign clinics, to practice in the old home town.

Dr. Bob Rutledge was big and gentle and unconventional. He inducted her into modern scientific thought and philosophy, as if it were a perfectly natural habitat for the female mind. She was amazed to find how closely parts of it tallied with what she had worked out for herself. She borrowed his books and pored over them. She delved into the innermost burrows of his mind as she had opportunity, until she was satisfied that she was not a freak and that even square pegs had a legitimate place in human society.

This knowledge removed an insupportable burden from her self-respect. She found an atmosphere in which she could function normally. Then Margaret blossomed. In this blooming her nature put forth unforeseen tiny tendrils

that thrust out their delicate feelers reaching—reaching—to fulfill some sub-conscious longing.

Her friendship with Dr. Bob flourished spasmodically as occasion favored it. Two incidents in their companionship gripped her memory and were never unloosed. One happened while she was helping him with the anesthetic in an emergency case—a wee victim of an automobile accident. He had lifted the tot whimpering with returning consciousness, to put it into her arms, and their eyes met—hers brimmed with tenderness and pity—his, brimmed with tenderness and her own longing reduced to terms she could not fail to understand. The second incident occurred months later when she was caught in a throng leaving a theater. Not knowing he was near she heard him say: “You will help me with that?” She had looked up and across a dozen alien faces, to meet his eyes smiling into her own. The crowd had become non-existent. They were alone in the lobby.

But Margaret did not attain her full stature till the War tried out her ideals and her purposes. When she saw her own son, her Donald, march away all lithe muscle and young ardor, she realized that she was still toying with life. She took stock of herself more seriously than she had ever done before. She tried to strip life down to its essentials—to get rid of the clutter of over bric-a-brac—over elaboration—over society—over economy. And life took on a deeper significance.

But no amount of Red Cross or kindred forms of altruistic work into which she threw her energies, could wholly educate her. She did not earn her spiritual degree till the telephone rang in the gray dawn of a November day shortly before the armistice was signed. The Western Union had a message. From Donald? Her heart prophesied evil faster than the business-like voice at the other end of the wire could utter it.

“Captain Donald DeWitt arrived base hospital New York this afternoon stood the trip fairly well.

“Signed ——”

She called her husband and they planned together swiftly. Telegraphing elicited the further information that he had been terribly gassed, wounded—that his condition was most serious—they would better come at once.

She packed their bags in a vast silence—a silence that the prodding noises of the train could not penetrate. A silence not to be broken by the insistent details of their three days crawling across the continent. A silence in which she gathered her boy into her arms. Even his joyous “Mother” seemed faint and far off. She lived in this silence for two blessedly endless weeks, weeks in which she marveled to find the child she had borne and fed and loved and punished and besought High Heaven for, was leading her step by step to heights she had never climbed. Two weeks in which she must stand by with a smile and watch the clay crumble away from his dauntless spirit. Two weeks in which she found her husband prisoned with her in that awful silence. But not till their boy’s last sighing breath had fluttered and was gone, did either recognize it for what it was—the solitude of the soul.

One may not dwell long on the heights—the air is chill and rarified and peaks are barren. Man must have warmth—food. Margaret worked her way back into daily living, doing what she could inside and outside the home, to relieve the inherited miseries of the War. But she was painfully dissatisfied with her efforts.

“We’re just swinging on the fringe of human needs,” she told Dr. Bob in deep discouragement. “We’re always trying to patch up, and piece out, and ameliorate. We never seem to get far enough down to the root of evils to stop any of them.”

“How now! What about drunkenness and wife-beating and cruelty to animals and better babies?”

“The babies are a beginning!—Yes.”

“We are fortunate to do as much, dear Lady! We shall be still luckier if we can hold what we have gained. We are right in the throes of one of the greatest anomalies in history—with Bolshevism, supposedly democratic, trying to establish the most tyrannical autocracy ever conceived, and Woman, the conservative and aristocratic force for

untold generations, suddenly becoming revolutionary and democratic."

"Then we are at last getting to the root of things?" Margaret smiled.

The doctor smiled in return. "I am awaiting words of wisdom."

"What you are going to get is brass tacks. But I have an idea—democratic ideas have always begun in the middle-class and worked up or down, haven't they?"

"In the main."

"Well, democracy has never really permeated the lower classes. And woman never comprehended democracy as a practical institution before because democratic government was never permitted in the basal unit of society, the home, except where the exceptional woman put through a successful revolution for herself. Now higher education and freedom from swaddling conventions and the responsibilities of suffrage are educating the female. She is learning to think, and thinking, sees the needs of the world—not merely those of her own class. She no longer tries to keep her children apart from the world as of yore; she is trying now to make the world fit for her children. And this is the real democracy! See, Wise Doctor?"

"I see your female mind seems to be in running order, Lady. What about our autocratic laboring man? He also has a measure of education, and freedom from conventions, and the responsibilities of suffrage—has had, for quite some time, but he is functioning more and more autocratically. Why does he not see the needs of the world?"

Margaret wrinkled her brows in concentration. She thought visibly and Doctor Bob watched her, his interest in her personally contending with his professional curiosity as to what were the actual differences between the man's and the woman's brains. He had a fancy to do a little original research work along this line himself.

"Because"—Margaret was feeling her way here, "because the laboring man has had to work out his salvation by specialization. Organization of his kind against the world-class consciousness. You see the world has always meant to him the ruthless human forces of the world—

government—capital—powers that be, that invariably put other needs before his own—that frequently crushed him into semi-slavery. While the woman—however much she may organize—must, in the nature of things, represent all human society. Woman power is a universal unit of force; labor power is necessarily a class force. And class is never democratic except possibly within its own ranks. Am I logical, O Man?"

"Far be it from a mere man to pass judgment! Your idea deserves consideration. I suppose it is up to the statesman to inject democracy—whether peaceably or forcibly—into the laboring man, else soon a republic will be a mere house of cards."

Margaret laughed. "I should say that here again the eternal feminine might help. When the woman once gets the home on a strictly democratic basis, the laboring man may begin to find out that democracy means everybody. And the woman is bound to be against bloodshed and anarchy."

"Ahem, what about the French revolution? And the woman strikers—and the suffragettes?"

"They are the exceptions that prove the rule or rather they are conservers out of a job because they had nothing to conserve—protesters against the *anarchy* of a law and order that denied adequate food and shelter to their children, that refused to extend to womanhood the rights civilization was wresting from brute force."

"I see, then the millennium will be sprouted when the woman gets her work in."

"The millennium will be started when the average citizen has it pounded into him that democracy means not alone himself and his son John or even his wife and his son John's wife, but everybody else and his wife."

Such discussions fomented new ideas in Margaret's brain. When the National Purity League started its campaign to decommercialize vice, she was one of the first in Capitol City to support the movement. Her daughter Helen, usually a zealous adherent of anything her mother undertook, worked with her and did her best to enlist her fiancé, Derrick Martin, in the cause.

One morning early in January some two months after Minette Doty caused such a flurry at the L. and A., Helen DeWitt astonished her father by coming to the breakfast table before him. She greeted his dignified entrance with contumely.

"Shame on you, Dad, you're sixteen seconds late." She consulted the tiny enameled watch that hung from her chatelaine, solemnly.

"No, seventeen—don't let it happen again, Mr. DeWitt—you know there is no habit so disintegrating to character as this vulgar American fault of being unpunctual and its concomitant of haste." Helen quoted her father's favorite homily with unction. She had heard it for the thousandth time the preceding morning. John Camberwell had never been brought to concede that there should be a relation between the time of retiring and the time of rising. You rose at eight regardless. Whether you went to bed at ten P. M. or sneaked in at three A. M., was immaterial to him. The principle involved was too important to be set aside for such a trifle as loss of sleep.

John Camberwell permitted himself an indulgent smile at her sally.

"I fear," he said deprecatingly, "you have dropped your watch again. Mine was regulated last week and I am exactly on time. It is a pity your mother is late."

"Oh, she's coming. I heard her take her nose dive in the tub a half hour ago. She's probably in the kitchen trying to persuade the Viking's daughter not to burn the muffins this morning."

Mrs. DeWitt entered hurriedly with a tiny smudge of flour on her cheek.

John Camberwell did not fail to notice this. His manner was painstakingly jovial as he conscientiously chided.

"Just a look in your mirror, my dear, would avoid such untidiness—trifles—"

"Light as air but—" chanted Helen.

"Olga never gets her waffles quite right—I slipped into the kitchen to show her once more." Margaret explained hastily. Not that she considered an apology necessary, but

if her husband felt happier for the concession—why not apologize?

"Father," Helen remarked apropos of nothing later, "would you consider it your Christian duty to see that Gabriel's wing feathers were properly groomed—of course, supposing that you and Angel G. got chummy enough for personalities?"

Mr. DeWitt looked pained and Margaret interrupted hastily.

"Quit your nonsense, Nellen. Can you drive me over to the L. and A. this morning? I want to see Veda and there's that Ladies' Civic Club meeting at two. Mrs. Starling wants me to give a little digest of the main points of the Bill. So many of those fool women can't get it into their heads what it means. They think we're trying to curtail woman's liberties instead of protecting her."

"Same old personal liberty racket the men used to work to keep the saloon in office," said Helen.

Mr. DeWitt drew his napkin across his lips nervously. "My dears, such liberties as you are taking with the English language!"

Helen waved a spoon airily. "All in the day's work, Father. Now, the saloon's so dead it's already mingled with its native dust. Derrick says they used to argue that it was a curtailment of personal liberty not to let a man own slaves. It seems to be the stock argument against all reforms."

Her father had taken up his newspaper to avoid listening.

"I see they are having riots in New York again. United Cloak-Makers principally—they must be Russian Jews. The police think the U. X. W. is behind them. Uh-m-m, uh-m-m, this is most menacing."

"Derrick says it is only a question of time till we have riots here, wholesale, too. He says there's more rumbling underneath than we guess. Of course he gets lots of straws from the reporters. Jack Dent sneaked into a U. X. W. meeting last week. Derrick said if *The Republican* had published the stuff he brought in, there would have been a mob doing business the next day, and Capitol City would

have decreased her population by night, even at the risk of lowering the census."

"That is what inspired his scorching editorial on labor's lack of public spirit, I suppose. I thought he went a little far for prudence—but the unions are insufferably arrogant at the commission hearings."

"It's a wonder his pressmen didn't strike," said Margaret.

"Oh, they were hot all right, but you see *The Republican* has done the unions a number of good turns. Derrick's foreman told him he was dead right. He said straight out the unions must have a broader outlook to survive. They were becoming a menace to labor itself—so much politics and graft—but of course that's not for publication. But you mustn't confuse the unions and the U. X. W., Father. The unions aren't hunting for a revolution. Gee, I wish I could break into a U. X. W. meeting! Mother, I met the most interesting socialist at the Paynes' dinner last evening. He's a German—owns right up and sports a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache—picture it! Nevertheless, he was charming in a stage villain kind of way only more subtle. I'd like to see more of him."

Margaret was listening absent-mindedly the while she reflected on the relative merits of veal cutlets or roast lamb for dinner. John Camberwell was also giving an abstracted attention. He was still thinking over Derrick's editorial.

"I am glad to see Derrick come out on the right side, Daughter. Personally I do not believe the laboring classes are any better off than they were twenty-five years ago when they knew their place. But he should be discreet—they are becoming influential—unbearably influential. But let us talk of something pleasanter—such serious topics impede the digestion. Helen, I have just set aside \$1,000 for your trousseau. I believe you and Derrick are planning to be married in April."

Mr. DeWitt polished his glasses, set them carefully astride his nose and regarded his daughter benevolently.

"Thank you, Father, but I shan't need the money just yet—we've postponed it."

"We?" queried her mother with a smile.

"Well, I—have postponed it, if that suits you better." Helen busied herself with her food, flushing slightly.

"That is your own affair, my dear." Margaret sought to relieve her daughter's embarrassment while she inwardly wondered for the hundredth time what could have happened between Helen and Derrick. "Only, dear, if you are making up your mind that Derrick isn't *the one*, it would be kinder to tell him at once."

"I haven't made up my mind—but I'm not ready yet." Helen did not look up.

Her father had been regarding her fixedly.

"Then it is time you were making up your mind, Helen. Seriously, this dillydallying reveals a weakness in your character which I greatly deplore. Derrick Martin is a very suitable match—fine family—fine character—good income—and you have pledged your word. Such obligations are not to be taken lightly—I repeat—not lightly." John Camberwell was growing sententious. He loved his daughter but there were some things not even a daughter should be permitted to toy with. "There is entirely too much flippancy about important matters in your set, Helen. People of our class must keep up the standards—you are not a shop girl or an actress or a profiteer's daughter to be off with one love and on with another, just as it pleases you—"

"Father!" Helen's eyes blazed. For an instant she seemed on the point of angry protest, then she suddenly controlled herself and took refuge in a subterfuge. "If you want to get rid of me, Dad, I can find a job."

"Helen," said her mother, "argue—don't beg the question!"

"That is entirely beside the point," said her father with dignity. "Your presence under our roof is the greatest pleasure your mother and I have, but we must consider your highest good—"

"It isn't for my highest good to be hurried into marriage before I'm ready. I'm not so sure I'm keen on marriage as an institution anyway—it's too much like signing a chattel mortgage on yourself."

"Helen!" Her father almost dropped his glasses in his horrified surprise. "Never let me hear you speak of a sacred relation of life in such an unseemly manner again."

Helen raised her eyes defiantly and gave her father a disconcertingly long and steady look. They were limpid hazel, those eyes—deep set beneath dark brows and bronze hair that rippled back riotously from her temples. Helen was like neither parent and neither parent understood that strangely arresting intentness with which she seemed to be studying her father.

John Camberwell did not like the look—it was subtly disrespectful. It was more than that, there was reproach—disdain—exasperation. He did not quite analyze all this. It sufficed him that it was a look not fitting from a child to a parent. Even if that child had attained the maturity of twenty-four years, and was duly certified to have attained woman's estate and to be a duly registered voter.

"We will not continue this discussion until you are in a more reasonable frame of mind," he said formally, rising from the table.

He felt that his dignity as a parent had been outraged. He had approached his daughter in a spirit of generosity and had been met with assertive self-will most unbecoming in the young.

Helen appraised her father's feelings pretty accurately. She did not doubt his genuine love for her—it had been even more tender since Donald's death. She knew that it meant personal sacrifice on his part to give her the \$1,000. She also knew that if he had hated her, he would have made the same sacrifice, because his position demanded that his daughter should go forth from his home suitably equipped. But it was not of this phase of the matter she was thinking. She was judging him in the pitiless light of his greatest weakness which had been revealed to her accidentally a few weeks before. She was arguing with herself passionately that if she were alienated from her father he had only himself to blame.

"How can he? He isn't a hypocrite—he believes all he says—but—with those in his desk—how can he?" She loved her father. She had learned to tolerate his rigid

ideas affectionately—to be proud of his strict adherence to principle in the face of modern license and ridicule.

As Mr. DeWitt was about to leave the room she roused from her meditation sufficiently to ask if she should run him down town.

"Thank you, I prefer to walk this morning," he replied curtly. "Margaret, I would like to speak to you a moment."

Helen watched her mother rise and follow her father from the room. She noticed her mother's little familiar movement as of squaring her shoulders, when she walked across the room. It was a family joke that "Mother" prepared for battle in this way. She wondered how much her mother sympathized with her father in this affair. She wondered if her mother knew about *those*—Her face set in ugly lines as she contemplated this idea. Just what was he about to say to "Mums" now? And what could she say to Mums, herself? She did not want her to think her fickle or unkind—Mums had implied that she was—yet how could she explain to her any more than she could to Derrick? And Derrick's face was reproaching her every minute of the day—haunting her dreams at night. Helen believed she had sufficient reasons for her indecision—but she could not defend herself because her only defense was to betray her own father. There seemed nothing to do but wait. Perhaps, she would come to feel differently after a time. She was sure her mother could help her but her father was her mother's husband. How absurd it seemed that those two could ever have been lovers as she and Derrick were lovers. Yet they must have been. No, however desperately she needed help, she could not stick a knife into her mother to get it.

She sat and rolled her napkin into a tighter and tighter wad, and put it into the ring, and took it out again, and put it in yet again. And the January sunshine played on her hair and burnished it into red gold that would have tempted any man to wait two years as Derrick had waited. Helen dropped the napkin with a thud and sprang nimbly to her feet. "There is nothing in God's earth to be done about it, so why fret?" She began singing loudly a rollick-

ing vaudeville melody which her father especially disapproved. A chance listener would have sworn she hadn't a care in the world.

Margaret DeWitt silently followed her husband into the living room. He pulled out her special chair for her and ceremoniously waited for her to be seated. Then the vials of his wrath were poured, not in a hot tide but in a sluggish chilling flow.

He paced up and down the room several times before beginning, polishing his eyeglasses on an immaculate linen handkerchief. He gave a slight nervous jerk each time in turning which resulted in a jaunty little flirt of each coat tail sadly out of keeping with the gravity of the situation.

Margaret smiled at this intrusion of comedy.

"I have felt for some time," said John Camberwell finally, having ordered his thoughts to his satisfaction, "that you were pursuing an unwise course in associating Helen with your quixotic efforts at reform. I have no desire to play the tyrannical husband and interfere with you, however ill-advised I consider some of your activities. I am still old-fashioned enough to feel that woman's place is in the home and that her intelligence, even if brilliant, is not of a kind that fits her to cope with the graver affairs of society. You have not seen fit to agree with me in this, and as you will remember, I have never insisted upon such an agreement. But while I shall still accord you this liberty, after Helen's unheard of outburst this morning, I must command in the future that you not only refrain from influencing her, but that you join me in forbidding her to take any part in your pernicious reforms. I do not wish to be harsh, but in all kindness, I deem it my duty to tell you the truth. I have been obliged to listen to some very caustic comments upon this ridiculous measure you are trying to put through the legislature. It has been most disagreeable I assure you."

"Comments from whom, for instance?" interrupted Margaret, a slight combative glow suffusing her face.

"It is not necessary to mention names—some of our most substantial citizens have voiced their—"

"Who?" persisted Margaret.

"Why, Mr. Bracy Landis was most unsparing in his denunciations, and the editor of the *Capitol Star* said 'those foolish women were trying to make our state the laughing stock of the country'—those were his exact words, my dear, you don't realize—"

"Bracy Landis is one of the very men we want to catch and the *Star* man is another—further, Landis owns a controlling interest in the *Star*. So they are beginning to squeal, are they? That's the most encouraging news I have had yet." Margaret faced her lord with demure amused eyes.

Mr. John DeWitt forgot his code for one brief moment—he glared—the term is exact—at the wife of his bosom.

"As to Helen, I do not understand what is on the child's mind, but I mean to find out. I do not for one moment believe, however, that it has anything to do with my 'pernicious reforms.' She has been hand and glove with me in this ever since she came from college two years ago. In fact she came home full of it. This is not an emanation from my fertile brain, as you seem to imagine, but a nation wide movement which originated soon after the War in the National Purity League. Helen's trouble started about six weeks ago—something happened to disturb her and she has been restless and unhappy ever since. I have wondered if she has heard something rotten about Derrick—I can scarcely credit that—he seems such a clean straight chap, or whether—oh, it's mere guess work, but I can safely assure you that 'the pernicious reforms' are not responsible." Margaret could not quite resist the note of sarcasm.

"I beg leave to differ with you, Margaret, and I repeat you must disassociate Helen with your reforms. It is most improper for a young girl to be connected with such a movement even in this lax twentieth century. I have felt it deeply for a long time. I will not have her future prospects damaged by her girlish fidelity to your follies."

"You forget, John, that Helen is of legal age. Why not talk to her?"

"What good does it do for me to talk to her so long as her own mother encourages her in her willfulness? You have

not, my dear, succeeded in teaching your youngest child the respect due her father. I have overlooked it—I am willing to overlook many trivial matters, but in an affair of such moment—I must insist.”

John Camberwell glowed with his own generosity. He had acquitted himself in a disagreeable interview even better than he had hoped. He had assumed a comfortably imposing attitude, right hand holding eyeglasses, lightly emphasizing his points, left arm folded behind him, head erect. He was not consciously posing—his convictions were too deep to admit of such frivolous aids to dignity. He was merely entirely and suitably himself.

Margaret found her sense of humor tugging at the muscles of her face. He was so sublimely in earnest—so divinely obtuse, yet there were real elements of tragedy in these hidden thoughts of the child they both loved.

“How,” she asked gently, “would you suggest that I go about detaching Helen? She has thought and talked and eaten and slept this movement as faithfully as I have for the past two months. Do you think I have only to say the word to send her back to fancy work and trench whist?”

Her husband, considering this a sign of yielding, was prepared to be magnanimous. “I leave that entirely to your discretion, my dear, and it is time I was getting to my office. No, we won’t discuss it further this morning—I leave it entirely in your hands.”

He stooped and kissed her warmly. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes bright from their argument. “Margaret was really remarkably young-looking for her years,” he reflected complacently.

Margaret DeWitt was at this moment entirely oblivious of her looks. She sat where he had left her smiling grimly. Helen coming in a half hour after found her still sitting there staring at nothing with the worried pucker of the brows, which Donald had once said was the way Mamma looked when she wasn’t thinking.

She started up as Helen’s warm hands closed over her eyes from behind.

“Dreaming again, was I? Well, Nellen, dear, this is a great old world—a great old world!”

## CHAPTER III

### A SMOKER

“**Y**OU may serve the coffee in the study, Lily Pearl,” said Dr. Bob, rising and pushing back his chair. “It’s cozier there,” turning to Derrick, “I like an open fire and a big chair with a cigar.”

The colored maid disappeared into the pantry and Derrick followed his host into his library, the only living room the doctor’s bachelor establishment contained.

It was a companionable room, book-lined from floor to ceiling on three sides, the fourth given over to hooded inglenooks and a great fire place above which brooded a panoramic picture of storm-swept mountains. This was his official corner for contemplation. Here stimulated by silence he puzzled out many a knotty diagnosis—visualized new medical possibilities—or in a laxer mood dreamed the wife and children, who might have been, into the severe snugness of this fire-lighted solitude. But these last occasions were rare. Dr. Bob was too busy a man to indulge in the luxury of regret. Still, the book people might not intrude into this side of the room. He must have space and privacy for his own soul and for welcoming his own friends. Books at best were acquaintances oftentimes impertinently intrusive upon a man’s attention. Valued? yes, cherished—needed much of the time. Montaigne was often “sanctuary” from his anxieties. Still the essential quality of a good companion was his frequent absence. A man must spend some time building thought for himself—not merely analyzing—rehashing other people’s cerebrations.

Derrick set his feet in the unexplored softnesses of the bear-skin rug and backed up to his half of the blaze with an unconscious craving for warmth. He took the cigar the

doctor proffered him absently and the two puffed placidly in profound silence for several minutes. Finally, Dr. Bob remarked casually: "I asked Hardwick to drop in later and bring Jock Landis. Know Jock at all?"

"Only in a general way—they say he'd be a fair sort if it were not for his father. The old beast is some load to carry on the path of virtue."

Dr. Bob smiled. "The Honorable Bracy is not quite such a heavy weight as he looks. He's bloated—corporeal body, reputed wealth, business ability—even his sins have been magnified. He's the worst case of inflation this burg's ever known. Not," he added, grinning, "that the Honorable Bracy's will to be a capital offender, isn't good, but he's so deucedly unpleasantly rotten that he has to pay an enormous price for young love. Girls are more knowing than they once were."

"If that's the case the Erb Act may stand him in a corner where he'll have to be good."

"Well, it struck me *The Star* made a noise like a squeal this morning in its editorial, though no names were mentioned."

Derrick laughed. "That's the fun of it. They can't find out just what we're doing or how much backing we've got, and they're afraid they will simply advertise the movement if they attack it openly. Barton told me that one of the *Star* men was quizzing him about it this morning—wanted to know how far I intended to back it."

"How far do you intend to back it, Derrick? I needn't tell you that I'm more than delighted that you're with us."

"To the last ditch, now I'm in. I wanted to keep out—it's going to be a jolly unpleasant mess, but I'm in to stay, all right."

"Even if Landis tries to muzzle you by getting hold of Cartright?"

Derrick turned quickly.

"What have you heard?"

"That that's his game. Cartright controls a good third of the stock of *The Republican*, doesn't he?"

"A little more."

"And you have?"

"About two-fifths, with Murphy's, nearly half—then there's yours and a lot of small fry, most of whom I've held proxies for."

"Well, you're sure of Murphy, and with mine, we just about split even with Cartright and the scattered shares. By the way, DeWitt holds ten shares, doesn't he?"

"Nine."

"How does his ultra-conservatism take to this measure? I have not cared to ask Mrs. DeWitt."

"He's kept absolutely mum to me, but Helen says he's squirming. He's a queer old duffer, though I don't blame him in this case. It hurts my bally pride to have Helen mixed up in it. Excuse my seeming disrespect to my future father-in-law."

"DeWitt may be queer but he's the most consistent man in town."

Derrick lifted his eyebrows inquiringly.

"You may not care for his point of view—he sure does function along rather narrow lines, but his mechanism works to a hair. His plan of life was drawn according to the most respectable traditions of his family and his day—he doesn't give a hang what the world has been doing since. The old ways are good enough for him. The man doesn't need to live his principles—they live him."

"Lord, I wonder how it feels to be as dead sure of one's self as he is."

"I should say moribundly comfortable for the individual but—" There were reasons why Dr. Bob did not care to complete his sentence.

Derrick continued his unspoken thought. "Yet he is thoroughly kindly—Helen is fond of her father and—Mrs. DeWitt I can never quite make out—there always seem to be large reserved areas in her personality upon which even the family may not intrude—and this reserve gives her great charm."

Dr. Bob eyed the young Irishman approvingly, despite the slight annoyance he invariably experienced on hearing Margaret discussed.

"You are keen. Some natures require breathing room

and DeWitt believes in the unities. He likes to have all the processes of life neatly compact, dovetailing into each other like a box of building blocks. But as I said, he is consistent—he has succeeded in being precisely what he intended to be—most of us haven't!"

"No, most of us haven't! Not by a damn sight!"

The doctor glanced up at Martin, who was worrying his cigar, one foot tapping the rug nervously. "What's eating him?" he ejaculated inwardly.

"To return to the paper," he said aloud, "I suppose you've heard the latest bit of gossip as to your position?" It was his professional instinct to probe for the cause of disorders. He had noticed an unusual abstraction on Martin's part all during dinner.

"Hm-m-m, my position—what in the dickens now? On the Erb Act?"

"Yep—your friend of the *Star* possibly—'a clear case of petticoat influence—gallant young Irish officer—charming fiancée eager for reform and notoriety.'"

"The devil!"

"You haven't heard then?"

"Not a word."

"Neither have I," said Dr. Bob, grinning fiendishly, "but one may, before the campaign is over—there's sure to be some mud slinging—but you seem to be prepared for that."

"I'm as prepared as a man for the noose, but your canard is a long way off the truth if that's what your angling for, Doc. I'm no feminist he-man, and Helen hasn't influenced me to go in, because I was reared with the notion that a man settled his principles for himself and was a rotter if he let any woman meddle with them. I'd have liked to funk it on Helen's account—I'd have had some excuse to keep her out then. But I've seen too much—three years of war ground it in. If the world's ever going to get anywhere, we've got to knock more of the brutishness out of the human animal. It's even more for the man's good than the woman's—the woman does make a living whether she marries for money or goes on the street, but the man principally reaps hell sooner or later."

"He does, but he thinks he's glued to heaven till it's too late. So you're no feminist, Derrick, and Nellen is."

Derrick winced at the pet name, a fact the doctor did not fail to observe.

"Never mind the 'Nellen.' I used to hold her on my knee. She cut two teeth on my watch case." He drew forth a substantial gold watch and handed it to Derrick. There were two sharp dents on the case unmistakably made by tiny scalloped teeth. A swift wrenching tenderness swept over Martin. For an unreasoning instant he felt deprived that he had not known this childish Nellen. Perhaps he might have understood her better. His eyes blurred for an appreciable part of a second, but his mouth was grim. He didn't mean to let his emotions betray him into any idiocy.

Dr. Bob had found his clew.

"Get it off your chest, man," he grunted; "what's ailing ye? If a few thousand will help out—you know where to come."

Derrick looked down at him gratefully.

"Doc, if there isn't an extra sunshiny pavilion in Paradise with your name over the door, there ought to be. It's not money, thank you—it isn't anything I can very well talk about."

He hesitated, tossed his half-smoked cigar into the grate, and faced his host squarely. "Damn it all, Doc, it's Helen. I'm losing out and for the life of me I can't see why. Not that I'm any great shakes but if she could fancy me in the first place—I can't see what I've done to forfeit her—Suppose though that's what every fool thinks!"

"Since when?" Dr. Bob looked his surprise. "Nellen was here yesterday about her throat. She was jubilant over your Sunday editorial."

Martin seemed disappointed. "You haven't any idea then—I hoped, possibly—I didn't know but it might be some question of nerves. Hang it all, a man never knows how to take a woman anyway!"

"Um-m-m!" grunted the doctor. "He never will till he takes the trouble to observe the 'critter' scientifically!

Martin, if there is any other human fallacy which man has perpetrated and stuck to as long as this cant about woman's being mysterious, because she doesn't always follow the stereotyped lines of conduct which society has ordained for her—I'd like to know what it is. Good Lord, there are just as many types of women as there are of men! There are women who loathe domesticity worse than any man ever dared. Women with as insatiable passions—women who have had passion educated out of them—women to whom the mate means little and the children everything—women in whom the spirit of adventure or ambition is stronger than emotion of any kind! And the average man thinks if he wins a woman, he should have a warranty deed to her for the remainder of her natural life—or at least during his good behavior, and that it is her duty to love him! Not that this has anything to do with your case." Dr. Bob suddenly realized that his tirade could hardly be considered tactful under the circumstances.

"No, as to Helen—I have no idea. She gave no hint that anything was disturbing her. Women frequently like to coast round the edge of their troubles if they are not quite ready to reveal them. In my profession I've learned the signs. No-o," reflecting, "nothing about nerves or sleeplessness."

"Oh, there's been no break—but—you know we've been engaged two years and now that I've had a raise—I want my own fireless cooker. Nellen's always seemed keen on it, too, but when I suggested April a couple of weeks ago, she wouldn't hear to it. Won't give me any reason—" Derrick's lips closed abruptly.

Dr. Bob's huge frame slumped deeper into the arm chair. He carefully selected another cigar and bit the end off. He smoked fully five minutes before he ventured a reply. Derrick glanced at him occasionally then his gaze wandered aimlessly along the rows and rows of books. He wished to heaven he hadn't said anything, but there had been something in Nellen's manner that baffled him. The doctor was a wizard and knew her from the ground up.

"Anybody else?" the doctor's voice brought him back.

"Nobody new that I've heard of."

The doctor smoked again. "Who is this socialist chap—German—can't think of his name?"

"Oh, you mean the man with the mustache—the stranger—he's only been here a few days. Nellen met him at the Paynes'. His name's Mayern—haven't seen him myself."

"Well, that's evidently a false scent. Any skeletons in the family closet or spooks in your own that some thoughtful friend could dig up to edify her with? Don't answer—I'm not prying. I'm merely hunting for a cause."

"On my word, no. My family has always been infamously respectable so far as I know—Ulster Presbyterians—Lord, no! As for myself there's mighty little for any one to unearth. There were two nights on the other side I'd like to cut out—I was crazy nervous and tired from the trenches. But I practically owned up to Nellen when I proposed to her and she was no end generous. She's always been the sort that could see your side. No, it's something lately . . . I think whatever it is started about six weeks ago. It's"—Derrick hesitated again—"it's our personal relation. She doesn't meet me as she used to—kind of shrinks . . . I'm afraid the jig's up. But I tell you it gets me where I live! Oh, Doc," he groaned, "I can't seem to sense it! Hang the luck, let's talk about something else."

Derrick picked up a copy of the *North American* and turned the leaves with unsteady fingers.

Dr. Bob smoked calmly on. Finally, having digested his ideas to his own satisfaction, he remarked unsympathetically, "Martin, if you let Nellen bluff you, I'll break every bone in your body!"

Derrick grinned delightedly. "You don't mean—"

The doctor had no present intention of telling what he meant.

"There's that blasted telephone! Confound Snow White, isn't she going to answer it sometime to-night? Hm-n-n—might as well go myself and be done with it!"

A moment later Dr. Bob returned smiling.

"You're it, Martin. Miss Helen DeWitt desires you immediately if not sooner."

Martin sprang to his feet with an alacrity that set the doctor to thinking.

"Too darned ready—maybe."

The doctor politely closed the door and the preliminaries of the conversation were deadened to an inarticulate buzz, but presently a crisper, more decided tone of Derrick's caught his attention.

"Couldn't be done, Nellen—no—really—I'd like to oblige you. Why, it wouldn't be safe to begin with, and you couldn't disguise yourself! You may be a feminist, dear, but you are unmistakably a female—don't look haughty. You couldn't get by—neither could I—I'm too well. . . . Go with Dent? No! He wouldn't care to try it again himself. You don't seem to realize. No—sorry—no! Absolutely, Nellen."

Derrick returned to the fire laughing yet perturbed.

"Wants to break into a U. X. W. meeting—our socialist friend has made her curious to probe the mysterious depths—funny how keen women are for the unusual and the extreme."

"The socialist brother must be a stimulating individual. German, too, and here our people are fraternizing with him before the headstones on our boys' graves are even beginning to be weather-worn. We are forgiving Christians, eh, Derrick?"

The stamping of snowy feet on the veranda outside made a response unnecessary. Derrick was remembering that Helen's brother, Donald, was one of the sleepers beneath those unworn stones—why was she interesting herself in this stranger? He pulled himself from his reverie as the others entered the room.

Garth Hardwick, long, lean, seasoned, and generally fit-looking as a native son of the lumber region of Michigan should be, looked pleased at seeing Derrick. Hardwick was a self-made man, and the process of making had sharpened his mind, and the sight and hearing by means of which he had shaped it, to a razor's edge. Dr. Bob declared Hardwick never let anything get by. "No fuss—no feathers—just six feet of clean cut efficiency with enough heart to keep him from being a machine."

"Homely as a mud fence, but the boss has nice eyes," was the general verdict of the girls of the L. and A. The male employees weren't so enthusiastic about his eyes—they found them steely.

Jock Landis trailed in in Hardwick's wake, a handsome, dare devil, irresponsible bit of Young America in the making. Dr. Bob and Martin noted his brawn, his easy slouch, his strong white hands. And Dr. Bob yearned to lick such a promising young animal into shape.

"Glad to see you, Landis, that was a good game your team put over Thanksgiving Day. Martin, hand us the cigars, will you? A light?"

He cupped the flame with his hands while Jock drew his cigar into a comfortable glow. He shoved them all affably into chairs, then added hospitably: "I've got a little light California in my chest if any of you have a cold. Wait till I coax the cullud lady to bring me some glasses."

He pushed the button and after due process of time the colored maid appeared.

"Mammy thought she heard you ring, Doctah, but I was telephoning."

"Smart looking nigger," Jock Landis remarked after she had disappeared. What he had really noticed was her undulating figure.

"Yes, Lily Pearl's likely—so likely that the steps of my back porch are getting worn down with the procession of her admirers and she just graduated from the High School, and Old Mammy, who has been my standby for twenty years, crippled up with rheumatism."

"Awful slam on your medical skill, Doc; better call in a Christian Science practitioner," laughed Derrick.

"You're in luck if the colored bucks consent to use your back porch," put in Hardwick.

"They don't, but Mammy cherishes a few obsolete ideas. When they began coming to the front door, she said curtly: 'No, sah, Doctah Rutlege, he ain't home this ebnin'—and slammed the door in their faces. A moment later she would open it a crack and add: 'Mebbe if you all go round to the back doah yoah find Lily Pearl in the kitchen.'"

"Mammy's a bird," said Hardwick, "but even mammy can't sweep back the rising tide with a broom much longer. I tell you I don't like the look of things. We're nearer a revolution right now than we have been since the first year of the reconstruction period. It's order or anarchy—we're going to have to choose mighty quick. The decent element in the labor party is getting snowed under all over the country. Martin, did you notice the line up of the Pennsylvania legislature?—the reds and labor together lack one vote of a tie. I've been making a little table of nationalities and the political leanings of the employees at the mills. About one-third of them are avowedly radical and that means Bolshevik uncamouflaged, and probably U. X. W. There's another bunch who don't give a damn what kind of a government they live under so they get big wages. A lot more will go with the crowd and there's a scant twenty per cent. who are American citizens first and members of their unions second."

"And precious few of them were soldiers!" interrupted Derrick.

"Still," said the doctor, "you can't blame them for that—many of them did their bit conscientiously at home."

"No, exempt occupations were no disgrace—the government was using them where they were most needed. But now, it's the employer who is sitting on the lid and the lid is beginning to sizzle."

"And T. N. T. is dirt cheap! The proletariat is talking bolshevism all right, allee samee Russia. Nice dénouement to the victory of '18 if our next fight is to restore order in the land of the free!"

Martin's American citizenship was comparatively recent and he was taking the country very much to heart.

"It goes deeper than restoring order," said Dr. Bob meditatively; "it looks to me like the birth pains of a new ethic that may be destined to supplement if not replace much that we have deemed impregnable in the old systems."

"Meaning what?" inquired Hardwick. "Soviet government?"

"No! A one class government can never be strictly

ethical. But the soviet has uncovered a principle which it doesn't quite know what to do with. It has the bear by the tail and is liable to do some distressful whirling before it gets the relation adjusted—if ever. No, soviet government so far is an abomination—but the principle is worth considering. It has been found much earlier in more reputable company than at present. Adam got it verbally according to tradition from a very highly accredited authority—”

“Um-m-n,” interrupted Hardwick, “I get you—I seem to remember something about man's eating bread by the sweat of his brow. You really think the time may come when everybody will have to sweat or go hungry?”

“I'm no prophet, but the Letvians seem to be giving it a try-out. I do believe it is ethically sound—whether it is practicable—well, society will have to change some, eh?” Dr. Bob knocked the ashes off his big cigar and poked the fire into a brighter blaze.

“It would suit me all right,” said Hardwick. “I'm doing all the missionary coaxing I can to make men work. Say, Doc, what'll you take to come down to the works some noon and pour that stuff into the men's private ear?”

Hardwick laughed cynically. “If we could arrange to make the working man stick to his job or go hungry it would be something like.”

“I fear the working man would be liable to make a different application of the principle. He might fall to and set Jock to work.”

“Lord! I do my sweating extracting money from Dad,” retorted Jock, awakening to a sudden interest in the conversation.

“If the effort equals the result, you are some little sweater!” said Hardwick with emphasis.

“Well, money's made to be spent, isn't it?” defended Jock.

“You have the authority of long precedent,” Derrick agreed.

“Still there are some restrictions as to how, Landis,” suggested Dr. Bob, giving the boy a pretty direct look.

Veda had recently confided to him her anxieties about Minette.

Jock was a delight to the eye certainly. The doctor was obliged to concede inwardly that he did not look dissipated. On the contrary he seemed extraordinarily fit. To be sure training looked out for that.

Jock opposed the doctor's scrutiny with a bored non-chalance.

"What right had the old duck to be preaching to him anyway?"

Derrick had scarcely heard of Minette and knew little of Jock's private life. He wondered what Dr. Bob was hitting at, and inquired of Hardwick later.

Hardwick had caught the drift at once and was surprised at the doctor's lack of tact in hinting at the cape episode so openly. He had heard the doctor was a bit rabid in his support of the Erb Act. He hated that sort of thing himself but—well, the Erb Act was going it a little strong. Pity if Rutlege was becoming an extremist—he had always seemed so uncommonly sane. He had a fancy to draw him out.

"By the way, Doc, changing the subject, what put you in line in this purity frenzy that has seized upon the women—if it is a fair question?"

Dr. Bob was surprised but ready. He drew his cigar from between his teeth for the twentieth part of a second and grunted:

"Major operations."

"Hm-m-n, you mean covering up? I hadn't supposed they were so all-fired numerous in these days with the general knowledge of preventatives."

"I said major operations, Hardwick. I guess the other situation is bad enough but it does not come under my observation to the same extent as the ordinary curative surgery. I wonder if you men have any conception of the percentage of major operations performed on women that are due to men's ignorance or brutality or promiscuity—and the big end come under promiscuity and ignorance."

"I've heard something of it but how does it connect with

an act forbidding paying women—I should think the moral would be to raise the price.”

“The moral is that the male of the human species is over-sexed, and commercialized vice tends to keep him abnormal more than any other agency or group of influences. It tends to propagate itself. The ghastliest feature of the brothel is the money-making end of it. Cupidity far outweighs lust in luring victims and in perpetuating the institution. The tempting of young boys—betraying or kidnapping young girls—prostituting men’s will power—all these things are a preying on human weakness for cold cash. Holding a man up with a gun is infinitely more merciful. Think of the unending disease—though sometimes I think that is the least terrible of its results.”

“Still”—interposed Hardwick reflecting, “this over-sexing, as you call it, is here to stay during our generation at least. Suppose you could do away with commercialized vice, aren’t you merely subjecting the decent girl to additional assault and temptation—and as for the boy—there is the abnormally sexed girl to be reckoned with. There’s a heap of immorality on the side nowadays.”

“There is—and it is growing rapidly under the fostering influence of the automobile and the movie—the ‘fade out’ looks good to youth and age alike. Yes, temporarily, if you could absolutely cut out the brothel, you might jeopardize the good woman, but you can’t work any reform in a day. And even with the money-making incentive eliminated you would still have the weak, the sub-normal, the vicious to contend with. All we can hope to do at the start is to kill prostitution as a paying business, then we can turn our attention to cleansing the public mind and curing the offenders—they are all diseased—mentally if not physically.”

“Why not tackle public opinion first?” argued Hardwick. “Educate before you cut.”

“Because when it comes to human passions the only way to restrain them is to take a club. You can’t educate a man when he is in a frenzy of wrath—you can’t preach morality to a man who is crazy with physical passion. You have got to put the fear of the law into his soul.

You can educate the coming generation. After you have put a few score of Lotharios through operations or terms in a sanatorium, immorality will become something more serious than the joke it is in the popular mind to-day. I tell you I see red as to what our boasted Christian civilization has done and still does to women. And it isn't the prostitute alone—the wife often suffers far worse degradation. It is right in the home itself that lust and cruelty are fostered. I said the man is over-sexed—the average wild creature could give him cards and spades on sex hygiene and the decencies. The trouble is man has added to natural instinct all manner of artificial stimuli—commercialized vice the most powerful reagent, but erotic literature and music, and the stage—not to mention vile talk and innuendo and tradition—pull mightily on 'the beast who would walk as a man.' And the man for all his intelligence is a worse prey to disease than the wild things."

"But," said Jock, "prophylactics take care of that nowadays—all a fellow needs to do is to be a bit cautious."

"Decent living, son, is what the race needs rather than specifics for indecency," said the older man mildly.

"Fear of disease doesn't seem to be much of a deterrent, probably because prophylactics offer relief. But I utterly fail to see how you link license inside the home with the Erb Act," continued Hardwick.

"Well, the connection is a deal closer than it ought to be. To begin with the man who accustoms himself to excess inside of the marriage tie doesn't balk much at a little lapse outside, especially if he can salve his conscience by putting it on a business basis. But to my mind the underlying evil is the fact that society has virtually given man a strangle hold on the woman's body, making the good woman almost as much a prostitute as the bad, and insidiously tempting even the honorable man to sensuality because, forsooth, does he not pay in food and clothes and shelter? And has he not the sanction of religion? Herbert Spencer dared to say that the unrecorded sufferings of women have been without parallel in human history. But nobody paid any attention to him. Society and religion between them had the one competent witness for the prose-

cution, the wife, safely muzzled. They combined to plunge the young girl into the marriage relation in as utter ignorance of its demands upon her as possible. She had absolutely no guide as to what was decent or hygienic or ethical in marriage. Her only standard was the will of her husband, and the church imposed this upon her practically as her moral law. The young husband knew little more. He had no obligation of continence. He had never been taught any hygienic or ethical reason for restraining himself from excesses or tyrannies and he had a time-honored precedent for doing as he darned pleased. If his wife died young from disease or over child-bearing, he dutifully bowed to the will of providence, and usually took another promptly, because habit is apt to be stronger than sentiment. I believe the woman's child-bearing and home-making should be her legitimate contribution to the economic side of the marriage partnership and not the yielding of her body. That should be left to natural impulse and not be coerced, because until woman becomes actually, as well as nominally, independent, man will continue to be over-sexed and both the individual and the race will suffer the ghastly consequences."

Hardwick still looked skeptical. Derrick was thinking what a jolly good argument the doctor was putting up for the cause. Jock Landis was openly bored. He considered women an amusement and most necessary in that capacity. Why make such a fuss about it?

"All the same, Doc," said Hardwick after a moment's silence, "the woman's lot is pretty much what she has made it. If she didn't like it, she wouldn't stand for it. Of course, lots of men are brutes and their wives naturally suffer—nobody denies that—the weaker always have suffered from the injustice of the strong—but the man makes up in other ways—protection and support. And after all marriage is not entirely the individual matter that lovers seem to think it. It is even more a safe-guard for society, and man being by long established custom over-sexed, as you call it, and woman's passion capricious and ephemeral if the man hadn't some means to put on the screws to enforce marital rights, wouldn't society suffer? Why, to p

your theories into practice would be to raise hell pure and simple."

"Capricious and ephemeral," repeated the doctor almost caressingly, "don't you believe it! The natural woman's passion is quite as sturdy a plant as the natural man's. You don't hear the average Latin complaining about a woman's being bloodless. The only thing he worries about is her loyalty. You don't really think, do you, that God or Nature or Natural Selection or Spontaneous Generation or whatever agency you hold responsible for life as we find it, was so stupid as to over-sex one half the human race and under-sex the other half, and yet keep the numerical balance as nearly exact, as it would be, if wars were done away with? Nature was no such fool! Society doesn't need screws; it needs to stop handling a watch like a steam engine. The trouble is that even physiological science has never taken the trouble to get at the underlying laws of the woman's passion. It wasn't considered nice to!"

Dr. Bob held up his hands in mock distress.

Derrick Martin had heard the doctor talk before. His attention was prone to wander to-night because of his own unrest. He was sitting in one of the ingle nooks over against the books. His eye was caught by one protruding from the orderly row. It had evidently been recently used. Mechanically he pulled it out and examined it—poems—he hadn't supposed Doc was specially given to poetry. The volume fell open where a kodak print had been tucked between the leaves. It was merely a print of a woman's hand. Not a particularly symmetrical hand either—strong, he should say, rather than beautiful. It was resting palm up with the fingers curled slightly. No, not beautiful certainly, yet somehow instinct with life-magnetic. He slipped the print hastily back into the book and glanced in the doctor's direction—this might seem like prying. Dr. Bob was leaning slightly forward with his eyes fastened on Hardwick. His face had a faintly ironical expression.

"Yes, marriage was like saying your prayers, too sacred a field for science to intrude upon. Sacred humbug!

Every human emotion is as subject to law as the functions of our bodies—the two are inextricably inter-woven. A normal woman's passion should not be either capricious or ephemeral. Why, man, Nature's chief ambition is to reproduce! No, if a man's wife wishes to be a sister to him, he probably has himself to thank for her coldness. Boys, you can sneer if you want to, but I'm in deadly earnest—the woman should not be subject to barter or be permitted to sign away her liberty under a fifty years' lease either. The Erb Act is only a beginning. Have you read it, Hardwick?"

"Read it! Ye gods, yes!" Hardwick twisted his mouth into a wry pucker. "Veda Brussilov and her crusaders have exactly fifty copies posted in various parts of the mills. Some of the men and a few of the women tear them down periodically, but Veda's game, and her adherents indefatigable. I can recite its provisions off by heart. The hard-headed ranchers will never pass it, but I believe in fair play and help the women out whenever I can. Bet I'm more letter perfect in your pet measure than you are, Doc." Hardwick struck an attitude and began to drone monotonously: "An act to punish as a felony the bribing of females to enter into carnal relations. Be it enacted by the legislature of the state of—: Section I. That the paying to any female either minor or adult of moneys or jewels or of any article of value to induce her to enter into carnal relations or in compensation or payment for such relation shall be guilty of a felony, and shall be punishable by fine or imprisonment or both at the discretion of the court. Section II. That the payment to any female of moneys or the giving of valuable presents except to wives—"

"Good boy, go to it" Derriek applauded vigorously.

"What a memory!" approved the doctor enviously.

"And blood relatives or to publicly betrothed—Had enough?" Hardwick was keenly enjoying his host's surprise.

"What do you let 'em put that rot up for!" demanded Jock with a crimsoning face. "I shouldn't think Dad would stand for it."

"Your father does me the honor to leave such small administrative matters to me," Garth replied coolly.

"Bet he doesn't know a blamed thing about this," retorted Jock insolently. To do him justice he was more insolent than he meant to be. He liked Hardwick but he had never been taught to restrain any impulse and he was hot against the autocratic suggestions of this act.

"It should be your first duty to enlighten his ignorance, Jock." Hardwick smiled good-naturedly. He omitted to mention the fact that the Honorable Bracy had made the air blue on the appearance of the first poster and was only deterred from tearing it down himself by Hardwick's representation that there was no surer way to mass the labor element solidly for the bill, than such a high-handed measure.

"The bill's sound in the main," declared Martin. "They might have left a crack for a secret solitaire—but it's the first intelligent move to get at the social evil. I was telling Doc before you came that, to my seeing, it promises more for the men than it does for the women. It ought to come mighty near getting the young boys out of the clutches of the street harpies."

"This hayseed legislature will never pass it," predicted Garth.

"This corn-fed automobile-owning legislature will pass it—they're the very element we're counting on. It's too good a chance to put a check on their extravagant sons when they come to the wicked city. The farmer is for morality, also for anything else that keeps his money from being squandered. It's the man about town, it's the Capitol City members you've got to look out for—and the underworld—one of them spit at me on the street yesterday. They know who's hit jolly well." Derrick got to his feet and backed up before the grate once more. "You might as well come in, Hardwick, the water's fine. It would sure mean increased efficiency among L. and A. employees."

"That's just what I'm trying to figure out. Will it tone up the men or tone down the girls? I can't make up my mind."

"This Veda Brussilov seems a meddlesome person," re-

marked Jock irrelevantly. He had been connecting Veda's crusade with sundry pebbles cast in his path in his pursuit of Minette. "She's some sort of a Russian Bolshevik, isn't she?"

"Veda Brussilov is the finest influence we've got at the works," Garth glowered.

"She's the salt of the earth," Dr. Bob supplemented. "If Veda only had a sense of humor, she'd be too good to be true."

"She has most of us peeled as it is," said Hardwick testily. He did not relish having Veda discussed, and was cursing himself for having introduced her name at all.

He rose and tossed the remainder of his cigar upon the coals. "Going my way, Martin?"

"Can't I run you both down in my car?" asked Jock hospitably.

The limousine was a luxurious affair for a cold night—rather too luxurious for a college lad. Martin thought a touring car would have been more manly. He knew there was no imputation on Jock's virility. He was a noted half back and he had done some daring things in the air—one that savored of the heroic. Martin looked at the handsome spoiled face and groaned at wealth's misuse of good raw material.

Jock watched the icy street and had little to say as they bowled toward the Union Club where Hardwick lived. Martin beside him was abstractedly going over the doctor's tirade, trying to find something that might help to explain Helen's state of mind.

Hardwick broke into his reverie. "The doctor seems to be extremely susceptible to woman in the abstract, but I have never heard of his falling for her in the concrete. Maybe that's why he is so tender of her feelings! A little practical experience might change his tune!"

"Well, they say a doctor comes about as near seeing all sides of life as anybody. I have heard the ladies make it a little difficult for a physician in more ways than one. I notice Doc has never married. Maybe they have never given him a chance to do the wooing, and I imagine he

would insist rigorously on that as a masculine prerogative," Martin smiled.

"The doctor's a sensible man—he doesn't think there's any need to tie himself up." Jock artlessly revealed his point of view.

"The doctor's straight!" retorted Martin curtly.

"Yes," said Hardwick meditatively, "however much of a crank Bob may be, I have never heard a whisper against him."

"Crank!" said Jock, "he's plain bughouse on this woman business!"

Their arrival at the Union Club punctuated the discussion.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WILES OF WOMAN

**M**INETTE DOTY flicked the crumbs from her napkin to the tiled floor. There were violet shadows under her eyes and a wondering, rebellious weariness in her soul. The gorgeous glitter of the Hotel Capitol was no longer satisfying. Its white and gold paneling, the translucent bowls of light suspended by heavy gold chains from a ceiling where cupids disported, the high Jacobean chairs, the unending whitedraped tables, the silver and glass, with more silver and more glass—seemed only to tire the eye. The women's shoulders continually slipping out of fragments of gauze or elusive silken straps—the diamonds, the rouge, the cloying fragrance of hot house flowers—the mingled odors of food and coffee and cigars—the cynical or lustful looks on men's faces—the excitement or ennui of the women, men and women alike playing the old, old game of sex heedless of its heartbreaks or its finenesses—merely playing, with life itself:—the pageant was no longer alluring; it was spectral! Here were the beginnings of melodrama that too frequently attained the dignity of tragedy.

Minette did not go so far as to think this out. She felt merely a sick distaste for the forced gaiety—for the perspiring waiters who came too close—for the everlasting thrumming of the orchestra that hammered every shrinking nerve into tingling attention. She patted a stray lock into place and worked her toes up and down inside her slipper to relieve the tension. Her old habit had been to beat time to the melody with one foot but this annoyed Jock. She had learned to substitute the less noticeable movement.

Minette knew she was walking on the edge of a precipice. Sometimes she took daring peeps over the edge to see just

how jagged the rocks beneath were. More often she drugged herself with the joys of the present and ignored the proximity of the gulf. Jock was going back to college in the morning and his father had advised him that his frequent week-end visits home must cease. Either he must go back and put in his time with some sort of regularity or he should come home to stay and go into the office at the mills. Jock had no intention of missing all the good sport of the university, even if he had to be separated from Minette and do a few hours' studying occasionally, to maintain a standing. His athletic record had covered a multitude of sins so far both with his father and with the university authorities. Still, he couldn't very well pretend to be in attendance at lectures in California when he was half the time corporally present in Capitol City. Though he had managed a fair bluff, so long as the weather was mild enough for him to use the plane.

To-night, he was not half sorry to be off. Minette had been a trifle dull lately. Her champagne froth seemed to have effervesced, leaving a residuum of something that had a slightly bitter tang—something with a coarser flavor, more like beer. He finished his demi-tasse, washed it down with mineral water, and pulled a \$20 bill from his pocket to cap the reckoning on the silver plate. He had not even glanced it over. He gazed idly about the room while he waited for the change.

Minette looked at him furtively—at the curly brown hair brushed severely back—at his bronzed smooth cheeks scarcely needing a razor yet, at his muscular back and strong white hands. She gave a little gulp and, shedding her languor, began to chatter brightly.

Presently the waiter returned and Jock, with a carelessly bored air, picked up a bill from the plate and left a weighty residuum for the servant. The negro thanked him murmurously and obsequiously pulled out Minette's chair and reached for her cape. Jock unceremoniously took the ermine from his black hands and folded it closely about her. Minette loved the lingering touch of his hands against her shoulders.

"Where now? Like to go to the theater or a movie?"

"Let's take a little spin, Jock, it won't be cold in the limousine."

"Huh, somebody wants to be cuddled, does she? She shall have kisses enough to last her for three months. It's rotten I'm to be planted for so long. Dad might as well put a few shovelfuls of earth on top and set out some flowers, eh, Min-tin?"

An imperceptible shiver passed through her. It always came at the slightest hint of separation.

He opened the door of the limousine and swung her lightly in. There was something so mignonne, so airy, about Minette: it was like tossing a bit of thistle down.

"Yep, going to-morrow. Gordon's sister is giving a house party at their place at Burlingame Saturday—we'll have no end of a lark. They've got a peach of a swimming pool and the Country Club crowd are the real thing. Dad would light the way with cuss words if he knew—he's afraid I'll be canned and it will get into the papers. Much good the old B. A. is going to do me anyway. I'd rather be perpetually a junior and have a Min-tin. You owe me five extra kisses for every day I've sloughed to—um-m!" He puckered his lips teasingly.

"Oh, darn that pup—I forgot all about him. Here, take him."

He displaced a warm whimpering bundle of young dog from the fur robe and handed him to Minette.

The girl gathered up his puppyship and held him close against her. He curled down contentedly absorbing the warmth of her arms and body. Something in the little creature's helplessness soothed her subtilely.

Jock headed the car for the park. Capitol City was too small a metropolis still for the interior of the limousine to give the exclusive feeling of two-someness they desired. New York or London or Paris isolates the human unit in their thronged thoroughfares almost as effectively as the solitude of a forest. One can become individual through the very multiplicity of one's kind, but in smaller groups the individual becomes noticeable and is crowded in passing another on an empty street.

Jock broke all speed regulations. His eyes were glued

on the alternating glare and shadow of the road ahead. He was not looking at Minette yet he was vividly aware of her. He did not see the tiny ringed hands clasping the Boston bull's velvety body yet he was perfectly conscious of them and their appealing charm. He could not actually see her rose-tinted flesh but its near presence stirred him vitally.

The car slipped among the etched shadows of the bare tree branches on the main avenue of the park. There had been a light snowfall in the late afternoon and the earth wore its feathery white coat as daintily as Minette her ermine. Every bush and roof and fountain was muffled in nature's fleecy wool. A clump of evergreens bore perilously heaped pyramids on every twig, and the shafts of brightness from the scattered arc lights detached glittering icy crystals from the mass and kindled diamond points of radiance. An exquisite world but cold—so cold.

Minette drew her ermine close about her and leaned toward Jock. He stopped the car beside a clump of evergreens and drew her into his arms, cradling her pretty head on his shoulder and in the hollow of his neck. He laid his own face down against the softness of her fragrant flesh and hair, and the boy, who was not quite a man yet, was supremely satisfied with life.

But the girl had become altogether a woman and was not satisfied. The sweetness of the moment was drowned in poignant foreboding. She dreaded to break the spell, but the present was but a moment and life lay ahead. Still holding the puppy in her arms she pressed closer to Jock. The little creature disturbed, whimpered unhappily.

"Silly," she admonished, caressing it. "Isn't he soft and helpless and silly, Jock? Put your hand against his ear; it's like velvet. Oh, I do love little warm helpless things!"

"So do I," replied Jock teasing, patting the puppy and then reaching his hand up to stroke her cheek. "That shows you are conceited, Min-tin, you must love yourself a lot."

"You don't think I'm conceited, really, Jock?" Minette searched his face with wistful eyes.

"Of course not, Ducky, shouldn't mind if you were—doesn't hurt a girl to know her own value. A fellow isn't going to put up for ermine, is he unless the girl's worth it? And you knew you were worth ermine."

"I didn't ask you for it, Jock—I've never asked you for anything, have I, Jock?"

"No, you're a downright little sport. That's one of the things that holds me about you, Min-tin. You're so sort of high bred—nothing coarse or common about you. I've met lots of dead swells who couldn't hold a candle to you for style—and—oh, hang it—I don't know just what to call it, but—why, you could pass for a duchess, you little fraud, just because of the way you hold that little head on your shoulders."

The girl's eyes flamed with sudden hope.

"You—you—don't mean it, Jock?" Her bell-like voice took on strange husky tones in her eagerness. "You know my people weren't common. Father came of a good family. And Mother used to comfort herself when she hated the movie business too awfully, that her mother's grandmother was a Connecticut Griswold."

She was watching his face intently. Her words attracted only a passing interest. She changed her tack.

"I'm going to miss you awfully, Jock!"

"Of course you are, sweetheart. I'm going to miss you," he returned easily.

He drew her still closer. She pulled away for an instant and tugged at the buttons of his great coat. "Let me inside, Jock."

He laughingly opened it and cuddled her inside its fur-lined coziness. The girl pressed herself artfully closer—closer against his body. She still held the puppy.

The boy responded with hot kisses. When he had satisfied his fever for the moment, she called his attention again to the puppy.

"Isn't he cunning? Do you know, Jock, I had a queer dream last night. I dreamed we had a little flat—" she was watching his face again, "and you were holding me close in a big chair almost as we are now and there was—I had something in my arms—and it wasn't a puppy,

Jock, it was a tiny baby and it had eyes like yours, Jock."

She finished hastily for a frown was creeping over his face. Desperately she nerved herself to go on.

"Oh, Jock, it was so sweet and darling and helpless—you loved it a lot and—please just listen a minute—it was a boy and"—there was a piteous pleading in her voice—"you said he'd make a half back to knock the stuffing out of any eastern team—"

"Nonsense, Minette, I told you long ago there was no marrying in this!"

He half pulled himself away but her charm was great.

"Of course, Jock," she resumed brightly, "this is only a dream I'm telling you about. It was a silly dream but we were awfully cozy—and it seemed pretty sweet to me. You don't mind my having silly dreams, do you, Jock?"

She nestled closer. A faint chill seemed stealing over her in spite of the enveloping fur and the neighboring warmth of his body. He was so close—and yet his spirit and hers seemed separated by the spaces of the stars. She wanted to cry out—to stretch out her hands to him—to clutch his arms and his neck to hold him, but the cold was numbing her. She battled against it.

"I went to that wedding at St. Paul's last night, Jock. I wore a veil and Constance Brown's hat so you wouldn't recognize me, if you saw me. And you were the handsomest man there—there wasn't one of the other ushers in your class. I don't believe the bride was any older than I am, Jock. My, but she was pretty—and her veil and that shimmering dress—it must be heaven to be a bride like that."

"Pooh, Min-tin, Grace Carlisle isn't in it with you for looks. It was the veil and fixings that caught you. You'd look like a snow wreath in that sort of a rig, only your cheeks would be pink and those blue eyes of yours would be stars, sweetheart."

"Would they, Jock?" The eyes were shining now merely imagining such glory. "Wouldn't it be fun if I could dress up that way sometime and let you see me?"

"There won't be time, Min-tin, you know I'm off to-morrow and I shan't be back before the spring vacation. Damn it all, if I could only use the plane! I'm going to

ship it out to California. You mustn't go back on me, Min-tin."

Her first impulse was to cry out with pain. Go back on him—how little he knew! But she had a swift inspiration. She drew herself suddenly away and making a little moue tumbled the puppy down in the robes.

"Why not, Monsieur Landis? Three months is a long time and—I found the loveliest bunch of orchids last night when I came home. No name but, gee, he had good taste! They were those great purple ones—fit for a duchess, Monsieur Jock."

She smiled at him, saucily eluding the arm reaching out to draw her back to her place.

"None of that, Min-tin! I warn you right now there'll be hell to pay if you so much as smile at any other fellow!" His possessive arm drew her to him fiercely.

The girl searched his face wistfully. She found passion in plenty, but the man's protecting tenderness for his own was not there. It had yet to be born in Jock Landis.

She played her little part again, though she knew now it was useless. "Oh, I don't know. There aren't any strings to me, Jock, and you are going to have a heavenly time for the next three months with Gordon's lovely sister. Is she so very lovely, Jock?"

"She's some beauty all right, Min-tin, but to be honest that cold stately type doesn't make a hit with me. I like blonde girlyies that cuddle, better."

He tried to draw her yet closer, but Minette drew away capriciously.

"Jock, you've mussed my hair shamefully." She drew out her tiny mirror and powder puff and proceeded to repair damages, leaning forward to get out of the shadow of the limousine top into the glare of the arc light.

"I hope you'll have an awfully good time, Jock. Dance a dance for me once in a while, won't you? I shan't have anything so smart but—" she clapped her hand over mouth hastily as if she had been about to let something slip. Then flashing a coquettish smile at his wrath, continued, "I may as well tell you I said I'd go to the rest of the Assemblies with him."

Jock's face went white. He gripped the girl's arm till he bruised the delicate flesh.

"Don't you dare—you're mine—mine—here"—he thrust his hand into an inner pocket and drew forth a wad of bills and forced it into her hand—"here's enough to keep you till I get back. Go buy anything you want. Don't you see this makes you as good as married to me! But you've got to let other men alone!"

For an instant the girl's lip quivered. A strange disdainful look flamed in her eyes, flickered, and died down.

"Do you think—" she began indignantly, dropping the money as if it scorched her, "do you dare to think, Jock Landis, that—"

Some second thought stopped her and she stared at him as if hypnotized for seconds and he stared back wrathful, hurt, utterly failing to measure his own pain.

Presently Minette drooped. The flush faded from her face—its pallor took on sickly shadows in the half light. She no longer looked at Jock. She stared straight ahead out through the snow-piled branches creaking in the winter wind. The world seemed so icy outside—here in the limousine it was deliciously warm.

She did not think this. These facts were merely the sub-conscious setting for the drama playing in her soul. But she stared out into the night.

Jock, putting his own interpretation upon her broken sentence and amazed at the sudden change in her, was softened again to tenderness.

"Don't take it to heart so, Min-tin. Of course I knew you weren't that sort to throw a fellow down the moment his back was turned. But I want you to take this. Get that little flat you wanted before I come back next summer, and I'll be in it part of the time—you can be jolly sure of that." He gathered up the bills and pressed them into her hand.

She pushed his hand away but he persisted, coaxing. Finally, with a shudder she took them and thrust them hastily into her bosom.

"Thank you, Jock," she said easily and lifting one finger with her usual sang froid, pressed it lightly to his lips.

She declined steadily to go on to the theater. "I'd rather say good-by here, Jock—I don't—I guess I'm pretty tired to-night."

In the shadows of the vestibule of Dormitory No. 2 she gave him back kiss for kiss hungrily, hopelessly. He did not know it but this was the very last.

And Jock hated to give her up and cursed himself for a fool that he had let his last evening with her end so soon. When he got out of the limousine at their own garage, he inadvertently stepped on the pup which both he and Minette had forgotten in their absorption. The little creature yelped plaintively. He picked it up, meditated for a moment in some exasperation and then seeing a light in the chauffeur's room above the garage, whistled for him.

"Dressed, Smithers?" he demanded as the man stuck his head out of the window. "All right, will you just take this infernal dog to Dormitory No. 2, L. and A. and leave it with the night porter for Miss Minette Doty?"

He gave the pup not ungently into Smithers' hands. "So long, Crackers," he said with a caressing pat.

Then he went into the house and paced up and down the living room trying to think up a presentable excuse to offer to his father for the sudden and complete disappearance of the \$600 he had given Minette—the money Mr. Bracy Landis had handed him not four hours before for his traveling expenses and his next month's living at the university. His father had been restive under his extravagances for some time. He reflected that he was a fool to give the whole roll to Minette—a hundred would have done her just as well, and he could have economized for a couple of weeks and never felt it. Nevertheless, he felt more comfortable because he had been generous. He preferred to do things "like a gentleman." One paternal roast more or less was immaterial. He finally decided that gambling would be the only credible explanation. So he went down to Slater's and watched the game he had no money to enter, till two A. M. Then he came home to find his father waiting up for him as he had expected.

Minette Doty passed the night porter, wrote her name and the hour of her return in his register listlessly. The

man was surprised to see her back so soon. He was also surprised at her dullness. Minette was usually airily gay with a saucy word for every one.

"Poor kid" he said to himself, "I hope there's nothing wrong, but it's bound to be a losing game for such as her going with the swells. She ain't got the cards to play agin him."

He watched her dragging feet as she commenced to mount the stairs.

"Minette," he called softly.

She turned wearily. He fumbled for an instant with his words. What he had meant to say did not seem quite easy facing her grave inquiring eyes.

"Oh, I—I—just wanted to say you—always—well, you sort of remind me of the little girl we lost. And if Mollie or I can ever help you out anyway—I want you should let us know."

This unexpected kindness nearly swamped the girl's self control. She swallowed hard and lifted her determined little chin high to choke back the faintest gurgle. Then she ran back and flinging her arms around his rough neck kissed him hysterically.

"You're an angel, John, a white angel, and I'll come to you and Molly sure if I ever find I can't take care of myself!"

Then she stumbled back to the stairs and found her room through blinding tears. Play time was over and life had begun. After a time when her tears had had their way she thought of Veda. Should she try once more? But she remembered that Veda was sitting up with one of the mechanic's wives who had a baby desperately ill. She was glad Veda was not there. She must decide things for herself. It would always be so now—just her own wits and her two hands against the world. Once more self-pity betrayed her.

She turned on the light and commenced to undress. The ermine cape was lifted off carefully. She searched the white satin lining for any spot or blemish. Satisfied that it was not damaged she looked it over appraisingly.

Madame Marie said it was worth two thousand easy,

"but of course they wouldn't give me more than half. Maybe I could do better in Frisco—still nobody there knows me—they might think I'd stolen it. I guess I'd better try here. If I could get nine hundred or even eight." She folded up the cape almost solicitously, slipped it into a clean pillowslip, and laid it away in a drawer. She unbuttoned her dress and reached down for the wad of bills. She took this out and looked at it, wretched—the tears began flowing again, but she dashed them aside angrily.

"Stop it, you goose, the game's up to Minette Doty—You've got to go it alone—what you whining about! You've got to brace up if you're—" She stopped and a tenderly fearful look crept into her eyes. Presently, she unfolded the bills and began to count them feverishly. She repeated the final count half aloud, "\$600!" as if she were a little dazed with the total.

"I ought to make it last a year easy even with hospital bills—and after that—God, how I hated to take it!"

The bills followed the cape into the drawer. She turned the key, took it out and hid it behind a picture. Then she undressed, slowly stopping now and then with a hook half unfastened, or a garment half off, to ponder. When she got down to her combination, she caught her reflection in the long mirror. She walked back and forth before it inspecting her figure from all angles.

"It doesn't show yet—unless—" She stretched the nainsook tightly across her abdomen. A balllike rotundity spoiled the delicate outline of her slender body. "I can't wait long. I'd better go right away and find some work before any one suspects—maybe they won't care after I once get the job. I can sure work three months yet. I can tell them I'm married. Madame Marie'll give me a recommend."

She still held the nainsook stretched tightly. She stared once more into the mirror. Her fingers loosed their hold on the muslin and slipped exploringly, lightly, almost caressingly over the protrusion.

"You're all right, honey bunch, don't you worry," she whispered, glancing about her furtively. "I took it for you—though I'd rather starved than have him think I

could be bought!" Her face convulsed. "If Veda only knew! If I c'd only tell her—seems like I'll go crazy if I can't tell somebody!" She sank to the floor in desolate sobs.

When Veda came in toward morning she opened Minette's door softly and glanced in. Her clothing had been neatly put away and her work dress had been laid out ready to slip into on the morrow. Veda heaved a sigh of relief. She had been worried about Minette. Dr. Bob, who had been keeping vigil also for an hour beside the sick child, had told her Jock was going back to college in the morning. Minette's face looked pallid in the weird half light that filtered in from outside. She must look after her for a while. "Thank God!" she thought, "Jock's train would pull out before Minette wakened in the morning."

## CHAPTER V

### ON THE QUIET

IN one of the older office buildings of Capitol City the greater part of the fourth floor had been converted into an auditorium seating comfortably about two hundred and fifty persons. It was used by one or two religious cults of uncertain finances and for various socialist meetings.

It was not generally known who the owner was, but Mr. Bracy Landis received regular remittances from the agent, so it is to be inferred that he was at least interested. He was not, however, sufficiently interested to pay any attention to the nature of the doctrines or principles proclaimed there. These seemed important only to the proclaimers themselves. The agent considered his duty done when he provided a meager janitor service for the dingy interior and posted general prohibitions against over-crowding and spitting on the floor.

On the same night that Jock and Minette parted, Banks Hall was filled from 7:30 till near midnight with an eager, perspiring, unanimous body of men who, whether their present lot were prosperous or poverty-stricken, forgot its conditions in roseate visions of a brilliant future soon to be theirs.

The gathering ranged in character from intelligent laboring men to loose-lipped sodden individuals whom the police would have spotted on sight. A new movement could not be too particular as to its instruments. It needed shock troops—not too much intellect or troublesome conscience.

On the rear row of chairs near the door sat a red-haired young man. He had not troubled to remove his cap—few of the men had. He was dressed in an ill-fitting ready-

made suit, yet his person seemed to disentangle itself from the crowd in spite of his modest efforts to efface himself. He was listening eagerly and his restless eyes seemed taking note of all about him.

The New York delegate spoke first. He was evidently a man of the world. His name, Mayern, was scarcely needed to proclaim him of German origin. His imperial mustache flaunted his nationality audaciously. He was suavely, superficially, eloquent. His words were cut crisply by a long full lower lip so mobile as to appear almost prehensile. He was prodigal of facts to prove that the whole political and social fabric of these United States of America was hopelessly and irretrievably rotten. He likened the nation's underpinning to worm-eaten piles—to burned through girders—to foundations built on quicksands. Our civilization was a house of cards needing only an expert touch to fall into its component parts—it was a mist waiting to be dissolved by the magic sun of U. X. W. propaganda.

The red-haired youth stirred slightly as the speaker pronounced the fateful letters. He craned forward as if loath to lose a single word. Mayern's glance was attracted in his direction and his gaze fastened an instant, with what in a less perfectly controlled countenance might have been a flash of startled recognition, but his periods flowed on smoothly.

"This decayed civilization so easy to destroy yet containing such potent elements of wealth and happiness for each and every one of them," he affirmed, "endured only because the working man had lacked the leadership and organization to attack it."

The audience waxed more and more responsively indignant with existing conditions—more and more enthusiastic for the change, more and more covetous of the pictured riches which were not theirs, as the evening wore on. Their own stiffening limbs and aching backs—Mr. Landis' chairs were certainly uncomfortable—the fetid air, the aggregation of odors from three hundred more or less frequently unwashed bodies: all the sub-consciously disagreeable circumstances egged them on. The Bohemian who dug his

bony elbows into his neighbors to emphasize the speaker's points, the old Lithuanian who expectorated vigorously past two smartly dressed young Irishmen, in the general direction of the spittoon in the aisle, did yeomen's service for the cause. Present discomfort cried loudly for future ease. The dust shaken from the cracks in the floor by restless feet was also accessory.

The New York delegate played his catch warily. A puzzled expression crept over the face of the red-headed youth—he had been so compellingly plausible. He settled back with a faint sigh as Mayern concluded.

The assembly was almost ready for action when Ivan Lapovich came to the platform at 10:30 P. M. He looked like a young god with his powerful frame and well-set head crowned with ambrosial curls black as the raven's wing of early Victorian fiction. His lips were voluptuously full and red; his eyes luminous with enthusiasm and the arrogance of youth.

Ivan was not clever, but he was crafty—he was not brutal, but he was sensuous to the verge of brutality. He faced three hundred of his fellow men keyed up to the point of action, and it was his office to bag them in a net of organization that should hold them after the glow of conviction had passed. He did not wait to walk up the three steps to the speaker's platform. He leaped to his feet. He bounded lightly from the floor to the elevated planking, then drawing himself up, greeted them, buoyant, laughing, overflowing with sheer animal vitality and magnetism.

The youth at the door leaned forward with something that sounded like a gasp as he recognized Ivan. The name, Lapovich, had not attracted his attention.

Ivan bettered Mayern in the force of his appeal. Mayern was after all a stranger; Lapovich was one of themselves. The fathers of grown sons warmed to his youth. The fathers of infants and growing boys saw in his vigorous manhood the type their own progeny might attain under ideal conditions of living. The young men responded to his enthusiasm. The room shook with applause before he had uttered a word.

"Fellow socialists, fellow workmen, fellow men,—I can-

not speak like this learned gentleman—I never got past the front door of their plutocratic colleges, but we all know that every word he says is *true*, if we don't know how the big wigs managed to fix things so they and theirs have been living soft while the rest of us have done their dirty work for them. But we're goin' to beat them at their own game—just chalk that down! We're going to work that same little racket on them they've been handin' out to us! We're going to quit pulling other folks' limousines out of ditches and ride in them ourselves. Now, what we want to know to-night is how many of you people want to ride—want to ride bad enough to take a little trouble. Let's have a show of hands on it."

The hands that went up were like a waving field of wheat. They entirely hid from view the cautious souls who wished to consider. Mayern had left the platform immediately after his speech and had made his way unobserved to the rear of the hall. He had been standing for some moments near the red-headed youth watching him narrowly. The latter seemed aware of his presence. He moved uneasily, and swallowed occasionally as if his throat were dry. But he had not so much as glanced in Mayern's direction. In the confusion of the vote-taking the latter stepped quickly to his side and touching his shoulder whispered: "May I have a word with you outside, please?" The young man rose quietly and followed him into the corridor. Their exit attracted no attention.

Ivan had laughed joyously at the show of hands—a wide laugh showing perfect white teeth. His hearers laughed to see him laugh. It was all in keeping with the mad promise of the future. They, who were to be liberators of their own destinies after the old world had ground their forbears under centuries of despotism—they, this handful, joining with a myriad other handfuls of their fellows, were about to put sorrow and poverty behind them and make life one long holiday. It was cause for laughter that it had been left to them to do this thing.

Ivan was enchanted with the laughter and applause. It was like vodka, it warmed you. It had a subtle propelling force. He felt himself pushed on toward great unknown

events by these fellow beings whom he was leading blindly forward. But he did not quite lose his head.

He must consolidate their gains. To do this he dropped his joyousness. He went back for a moment to his own bleak childhood in a Russian peasant's hut. He told about hunger, cold, children dying from lack of food or through ignorance. Then the move to this country—the desolate poverty of the first year in New York—more death—more suffering, before the gradual rise. He pointed out the great advance in the position of labor. The advance made possible because labor had found itself; had learned its own power. But labor sometimes forgot who had been its teacher. Did they realize that labor owed its organization to socialism—socialism that had roused the class consciousness of the proletariat. “They call us that to rhyme with lariat, they think that’s good enough for us while they live in palaces!”

He was growing bolder now. “Our brethren in Russia made a start. They tied the lariat round the necks where they belonged. They accomplished wonders. They would have made Russia a heaven for the laboring man but for their ignorance. American labor is not ignorant—American socialists are not ignorant. They are wise. They—”

“You bet they are! Too all-fired wise to be taken in by such guff!” A pugnacious voice from the rear of the house interrupted.

Some one sitting beside the rash protester clapped a hand over his mouth before he could say anything more. There was a storm of hisses from all sides. Ivan had recognized the offender. It was Howard, a machinist, who owned his own home and had a family of half grown children coming on.

“Old Howard thinks because he owns a lawn as big as a pocket handkerchief that he’s in the capitalist class—doesn’t like to hear his friends knocked, boys,” he sneered. “As I was saying, we are wiser than the capitalist pigs—” Ivan was irritated by the inopportune interruption, “who spend their time with paid mistresses and airplanes while we pay for the pleasures of their bodies with the sweat of ours. They thought they could suppress us by deporting

a few dozen of our leaders—by raiding our halls and seizing our newspapers! Did they succeed? There are a million of us in good old America this evening—completely organized—needing only to arm, to triumph gloriously!”

Ivan lifted on his toes and tossed his dark curls impetuously. He was thinking empires—the walls of the dank hall were confining. The men craned forward drinking in their own power. Each man who listened heard Ivan’s words fluted to the timbre of his own ideals or desires.

“They tried to hold us with rot about home and country and family. The world’s our country, comrades. It is to laugh because their own God-given prophet showed us the way. Self-determination of peoples—sure, right here in the United States!”

He sketched the U. X. W. program rapidly. The big cities were all in the movement—their own was among the last. The leaders hoped to be ready to strike by the following September. The sooner the better before the capitalists and all their gang of lawyers and preachers and doctors and engineers and the cursed American Legion got wind of it and prepared to defend themselves. He was volubly vituperative against the legion. The Reds feared it more than the regular troops—more than the government—more than God!

“We must be prepared to act swiftly.” He instinctively lowered his voice. His hearers leaned nearer to catch every word. “Companies are being formed to drill—I told you we must beat them at their own game. How many times have they set troops on us during our strikes, shooting us down easy because we’d had no training and couldn’t get hold of the guns! This time we’re going to have the guns and grenades—and gas—if we need it. We’ll show ’em a thing or two about running airplanes also.”

There were boxes of rifles already at hand, he continued, but this was not to be mentioned even below one’s breath. He should not have told them but he trusted them, every one—like brothers.

They were almost if not quite ready by this time. Mayern had returned to the hall but his companion was

not with him. Ivan clamped the fetters of the enterprise upon the men by calling for volunteers for his own company. He had been a sergeant in a New York regiment. He had never reached the front but he had experienced everything in his own fancying. He had gone over the top, he had faced the barrage, been wounded, decorated—his vigorous imagination balked at nothing. It had experienced all glory and all suffering for him vicariously in the past—it leaped forward now to taste the joy and adventure of the future.

Before the clock in the city tower chimed twelve, every man in the hall (the objector had been summarily conducted to the stairs some time before) had enrolled in one of the three companies just organized. Very few knew exactly what was expected of them. Few desired bloodshed. Their willingness to do violence to their fellow-men was the old brute instinct of survival. The old-new motive of the robber baron, and the brigand, and the profiteer. Not one but had some measure of comfort, often luxury, in his own life. Not one even guessed what actually lay ahead. A few were sincere idealists ready to sacrifice themselves for what they believed a great cause.

They enrolled their names with shining eyes. For the most part with jests and much strutting over what they would do to the unsuspecting profiteers when the new order was established. They dug deep into their pockets and planked down the dollars or the I. O. U's. that were to furnish the stage settings for their drama. Then the meeting broke up and they slipped out and dispersed quietly. They had no wish to attract the notice of the police or the reporters by boisterousness. The three hundred dissolved like the mists of spring but they left no fragrance behind.

Ivan and five others remained and counted the spoils and gloated. Mayern was much taken with Ivan. He linked his arm familiarly in his and invited him to the hotel for a further conference. Once there he plied him with choice cigars and champagne. Ivan had never tasted champagne before. He found it to his liking though hardly so heady as the draught of leadership he had just drunk. He was

still tingling with a mysterious magnetic power that seemed to have flowed into his veins while he addressed the men.

Mayern divined the younger man's exalted mood.

"You sure turned the trick! I've never seen it done neater and I've organized over two hundred companies. Why, man," he clapped Ivan on the back heartily, "you can have anything you want from the Central Committee with that silver tongue of yours. You made them follow like sheep—they could fairly see you sprinkling salt on the rocks ahead of them. They'll lick up the salt before they find the rocks." He laughed scornfully.

Ivan did not quite like the ring of that laugh, but the champagne was producing a drowsy content almost as agreeable as his mad joy had been.

"Pooh," he replied, "we'll have a hundred central councils—we'll all be kings and factory owners, and the judges and the doctors and the college presidents shall black our boots—and the dainty ladies shall lay their heads on our shoulders instead of theirs—see?"

Mayern looked disappointed in his disciple for a moment, but he remembered the champagne and humored him. He believed Ivan had brains—and brains were needed on that central council to make the ranks of the movement step off in unison. He did not want chaos—the anarchy Russia had known. He was German and had the German obsession for precedent and order.

In common with the more intelligent of the Bolsheviks he merely hoped to replace the old order with a new order, not greatly unlike the other save that there should be a complete reversal of position, a scriptural making the least among them the greatest, so those who had been kicked might have a turn at the kicking.

Mayern had no wish to see property held in common. He himself intended to own—to own largely. He would want laws to protect him and his children after him in that ownership. It was the old German dream to seize by might all that was desired, and then establish themselves in legalized possession. America had beaten his people in battle; they should yet rule America by craft, using the very brawn that had humbled Germany to help them rule.

Were not the Marxian principles German? Were not the instigators of Russian bolshevism, German? Were not the leaders of the I. W. W. largely German? And this new movement compounded of all these—did not he and a score of others know that its triumph should fulfill that old dream of German super-men?

Of course these ideas were only for the elect. Mayern had never intended to confide much of this to Ivan. Owing to the effects of the champagne, he did not even betray the lesser secrets of the Central Council. He was pondering as to whether he should inform him of the intruder who had been in their midst this evening. He decided against it. He did not believe the lady would give them any further trouble—he laughed silently at certain recollections of his encounter with her. Further, she had not secured any incriminating evidence, if that was her game. He wondered if she had slipped in purely out of curiosity, as she had declared. He intended to turn the incident to account if he ever found opportunity. Miss Helen DeWitt was a rather stunning type. Mr. Mayern was not unmindful of personal pleasures even in the thick of business. "The evening had been remarkably successful all around," he congratulated himself.

Capitol City was now organized and would soon be seething. He would try out Ivan and one or two others before he trusted himself to pick a local leader. He had seen enough of Lapovich for to-night. He piloted him safely through the hotel lobby and put him on his car lest the champagne should attract attention.

Ivan roomed with one of the married workmen. He had no mind to submit to the restrictions of one of the L. and A. dormitories, though these were much lighter for the men than for the women, Garth Hardwick being firmly convinced that the greatest kindness to the woman was to look after her closely. The dormitories offered greater comforts than the cottages, but Ivan preferred freedom to luxury. He took his meals at the general mess because he loved a crowd, and it was his policy to keep in touch with the gossip of the plant and the men's moods.

The Russian was not drunk to-night—he was mellow—

impatiently mellow by the time he arrived at Schmidt's. He resented the light burning in the hall until he remembered the sick baby. He threw himself into bed but half undressed. His clothes were smart for a working man. And his soft shirts, his ties and socks, were of a better grade than was usually worn by the young bucks of the L. and A., or the plumbers and painters who could far better afford to be well-dressed than most of the clerks and young professional men about town who held themselves several notches higher in the social scale.

Ivan had lived until he was ten years old in a Russian peasant's hut sans privacy, sans bathing, sans any of the niceties of living. His life in New York for the next nine years had been passed under similar home conditions, leavened it is true by the teachings and sanitary requirements of the public schools. He learned "to slick up" on the outside. His English was fairly pure, except for street slang and an occasional lapse, because he had learned it first in school. In his boyhood he had been avid for books. He did not love books, but since in Russia they had belonged almost exclusively to the class above him, his boyish ambition had seen in them a passport to unknown and glorious adventure. So Ivan astounded his teachers with his progress. He copied such of the refinements of life as appealed to the eye. He did not see people bathe—he could not know the inner rites of dainty habits or the still more hidden spiritual refinements which should accompany these. Therefore Ivan was still a barbarian when he was drafted in '17 and sent to a training camp to learn how to be an American and a soldier.

There the regulations and his mates worked together efficiently in civilizing him. They persuaded him that a clean neck was necessary by the vigorous application of sapolio and hot water applied with a broom in the hands of his indignant fellows. His mess mates taught him that it was unethical to be a hog, and the regulations shined his shoes and brushed his hair and doomed him to an occasional shower. But he never acquired the Anglo-Saxon fondness for water. Bathrobes and pajamas and manicure sets had yet to make their appeal. He was in a sense

familiar with them through the movies. But they were not of his world.

So Ivan crept into bed after shedding his outer garments. He had slept for perhaps an hour when he was awakened by a child's crying in the next room. The fretful wailing annoyed him. He was too healthily sound himself to have any sympathy for pain. There had been a disagreeable odor of herbs and disinfectants in the hall as he came through. He turned over impatiently but he was roused further by a familiar voice. Veda Brussilov was crooning softly to the little one. He listened to the soft minor notes resentfully. Why was Veda wasting herself on that brat? The mother could tend her own.

He was tempted to get up and tell her so. Veda had been overtired lately and consequently difficult. "There was no sense in her doing all these unnecessary things." He half-raised himself in bed but he was drowsy; he sank back into the warmth of his blankets. The singing ceased presently and he slipped into the dreamless sleep of the healthy animal.

## CHAPTER VI

### MORE ABOUT LOVE AND LOVERS

**V**EDA was suddenly tired next morning. Her too scanty sleep had been plagued with vague, unhappy dreams in which a child's fretful moanings mingled with fears of some coming disaster. She overslept and would have been late but for Minette's repeated shakings.

"Veda, for goodness' sake, are you sick?" she demanded, when Veda sank back drowsily after she had nearly pulled her out of bed.

Veda roused at this.

"Sick? No, what made you think so?"

"Why, I couldn't waken you. You must stop wearing yourself out this way or you will be sick. What's the matter with the Company nurse? Why couldn't she sit up with the baby?"

Veda sat up and rubbed her aching eyes.

"They feel like burnt holes in a blanket," she groaned. "The nurse—oh, she was helping Dr. Bob with one of the Polish women. I don't know whether she and her baby pulled through all right, or not. She was having an awful time, they said."

Minette was polishing her finger nails with Veda's buffer. Her eyes dilated with a new fear.

"Do—do they often die?" she asked.

"Who, the babies or the mothers?"

"Both—either?"

"Not very often—the mothers hardly ever, if the doctor knows his business, but the babies—accidents happen with the first ones every once in a while. This was a first one."

Veda rather wondered at Minette's concern. The girl was seldom interested in her benevolent efforts or in the other women. The incident recurred to her later in the day.

This was the beginning of a twenty-four hours which the devil himself seemed to have arranged for Veda's undoing. She was too languid to hurry with her dressing. She took herself wearily down to breakfast fifteen minutes late. Her coffee was luke-warm, her bacon and eggs fried into crackling and burned albumen. She forced down a few gulps of the coffee but turned from the food in disgust.

As she was hurrying through the park to the factory, Ivan overtook her, and slipping his arm through hers without a word, pulled her up with a jerk. She was surprised into a little nervous scream which seemed to amuse her lover. He laughed teasingly.

"What you hurrying so for, Veda? The boss'll look the other way if he sees you coming in behind the whistle."

Ivan was also tired this morning—hatefully tired—his nerves jangled and he was moved by a half understood impulse to make somebody else feel uncomfortable too.

Veda did not realize this but she was perfectly well aware that his reference to the boss was intended as a taunt. She set her teeth hard and did not answer till she felt sure of herself.

Ivan peered down into her face. His powerful fingers were pressing voluptuously into the soft flesh of her upper arm. The gracious contact mollified his ill humor a trifle.

"I sat up with the Schmidt baby at your house. You came in very late, too—I heard you. You must have had an exciting meeting. What did the New York delegate want?"

Mayern's instructions had been most explicit. He had sworn the men to secrecy before they left the hall the preceding evening. He had specially cautioned them about dropping any hints to their women. He feared their discouraging influence even more than their loose tongues. Labor had not found its women folk ready for strikes of late, they were too comfortable. Mayern knew well enough they would not countenance this warlike move. "Time enough for them when the trap's sprung," he had told Ivan after the meeting. "We can't have them whining around disheartening the men. Just tell them it's a movement to provide every one of them with a home of their

own—that'll fetch 'em. Then set 'em to working for the fund. There's nothing will rouse a woman's interest like hustling for something or somebody. You young men ought to get wise to this—make a woman slave for you and she'll love you forever, same as a dog."

He had scanned Ivan with a leer as he delivered this admonition. He thought he looked egoist enough to take it literally. Ivan had accepted it as a pleasantry—a pleasantry that had an irritating side since this was what the Russian peasant had always done, not so much from any deliberate intent as from grim necessity. Ivan had discovered that the wives of capitalists did not slave. But he kept his thoughts to himself.

"Yes, I knew you were there," he replied to Veda's question, "though you were so exclusive you couldn't even call good evening to a fellow—nice sweetheart, you are. You might at least have given me a good night kiss. I've a mind to take one now to even up." He drew her nearer.

"No, no, Ivan, not on the street. I couldn't speak to you last night without disturbing the child. I didn't suppose you knew I was there."

"I heard you singing to the kid. Why is it, you always have time for every Dago's brats lately, but you turn me down when I'm willing to spend my good money taking you to a show?"

Ivan was not angry. He liked to put Veda in the wrong. Like all generous spirits she made it up to him fifty fold.

But this morning Veda turned her dark eyes on him wearily. His reproach about the show was a month old and had already been threshed out between them. Must she justify herself for every generous impulse? He had always been opposed to her acts of charity if they interfered in the least with his plans, though he was proud in a possessive way of her position and influence in the L. and A. mills.

As a matter of fact most of his displeasure so far had not been very deep-seated. Even his half-formed jealousy of Hardwick gave him a pleasurable sensation. The boss's notice of Veda enhanced her value in his eyes and in those of his mates. He derived an increased sense of his own

importance from having the boss single his girl out from the five hundred others, so long as it was distinctly understood that Veda was his own especial property. He never let an opportunity go by for asserting this fact.

For some months Veda had gloried in this aggressive possession, but of late it had palled. She began to feel stifled in his presence. His mere animal strength from becoming a source of pride, commenced to oppress her. Her satisfaction in her work, her joy in her power to help her mates,—the crusader's impulse which had become so vital a part of her nature seemed to dwarf to nothingness when Ivan appeared. She was no longer herself, Veda Brussilov. She was a woman—his woman. He demanded caresses, he demanded her absorbed interest in himself and his affairs. There was no room for Veda's personality in their relation save as it supplemented his own.

When Veda was with Margaret DeWitt or Helen, with Dr. Bob, or Garth Hardwick, the world opened out into delightful unexplored vistas. She felt self respect, the pride of personal responsibility. Her mind responded avidly to the stimulus of their broader thinking and wider knowledge. When she returned to Ivan, she seemed to be prisoned in bonds of a poignant physical tenderness threaded into the fibers of her being. The mere thought of tearing these away made her suffer acutely, and yet her spirit was struggling in soft meshes that threatened to strangle it.

Ivan was too wrapt up in his own thoughts to notice the hunted expression in her eyes. He was resenting her haggard looks, and at the same time was building fairy castles on the foundation of Mayern's disclosures.

The velvety lusciousness of Veda's flesh beneath his exploring fingers started sensuous pictures of a glorified Veda in a shimmering evening dress, which should reveal other velvety expanses of warm white flesh. He pictured himself and Veda in such a palace as Bracy Landis' colonial mansion. He saw servants toadying at his nod. He saw Veda dressing for him—catering to his comfort, bearing his children and bringing them up to rival the society youth he

had occasional glimpses of in theaters and hotels. He chuckled to himself in his confidence that Veda "could hold her own with the best of them." He went so far as to form a mental picture of Garth Hardwick in envious love-sick dejection before this resplendent Veda, whom he, Ivan, led off carelessly.

Veda broke into this agreeable pastime with the ruthless present. She deeply resented his dragging up the old grievance of the movie.

"Ivan, I explained all that long ago. I will not be taken to task like a child all the time."

She tried to draw away. "Let me go, I'm late and I'm not in a mood to talk this morning!"

Ivan gripped her arm tighter.

"Not so fast, my girl, I'm not to be shaken off like an old shoe because you saw fit to wear yourself out last night tending to somebody else's business. You had time to burn last night—you can just take a little time this morning. I've got a matter to talk over with you. It's damned important—"

"What is it?"

"It's about this movement I started to tell you about, only you're so devilish independent. Mayern wants we should organize the women. There's got to be a lot of money raised and you girls can wheedle it out of the men a heap easier than we can. We want you to touch the boss too, though he'd see himself in hell before he'd give you any, if he knew what it was for—"

Ivan laughed uproariously. Two girls who had just passed them turned and looked back.

"What is it for?"

The young man sobered quickly. He had not intended to make such a slip.

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" he asked quickly. "It's a scheme to help the men to homes. It's to head off this wholesale housing by the Company where we have to take what's handed us and say thank you, and give us a chance to plan homes for ourselves."

"How are you going to manage it? We couldn't begin

to get as comfortable rooms or houses down in the city for the rent we pay the Company. But it's all we can afford to pay."

"Never you mind how! It's a dead secret for the present, but the New York man has a plan that'll make you dizzy when you hear it. There'll be no more working for you, Veda girl, when we put it through. I intend to make a lady of you. What'd you say to a pearl necklace and a limousine and a few other little extras such as the swells have been flaunting in your face? You won't have to be hanging on to half-raters like the DeWitts—they'll come slinking up to you to be noticed."

Ivan was letting himself go but he had tested Veda's discretion before.

The girl turned to him in amazement. "Ivan, you weren't drunk last night?"

Before Ivan could retort they were caught in a little knot of late comers hurrying into the works.

"I'll be along this evening after dinner," he whispered, as they separated. "Mum's the word about what I told you—remember!"

Veda hurried to the cloakroom to leave her wraps, then sped swiftly down the corridor to her beat. She was puzzling over Ivan's words and his evident excitement. "What was up?" Surely, surely, he had not joined the U. X. W.!

The U. X. W. was more truly a secret organization than its parent organizations had ever been. It did not establish headquarters openly. Frequent police raids had bred discretion. It was a fluid organism, gathering into communal pools here and there in the larger cities, but able to seep away in the interstices of urban life at the first alarm. U. X. W. assets were concealed. Its numbers were concealed. Its real program was known only to its more intelligent and tried members. Its propaganda was incessant but veiled. The old gospel of martyrdom was about played out. Ghastly pictures of Joe Hill and other victims of the law, once such magnets for drawing dollars, were no longer in evidence. The sacrificial sentimentality for everything oppressed that had swept America during

the war and for the two years following, had disappeared. In its place had developed a certain hardness of the public mind that resented any appeal to its sympathies or to its pocketbook. The movement had recognized this and had changed its tactics. It no longer demanded money for vengeance or defense; it asked for investment in the new proletarian future that was to yield a hundred per cent. dividends.

But they found it harder to reach the women with this presentation. Too many rumors of the starvation and misery worked by the Russian soviets had percolated through the laboring classes in the United States. The older women were fearful—half-hearted, the unmarried ones and the girls held this New Jerusalem lightly, as a possible rainbow in a sky already serenely blue. Suffrage and equal wages for the man and the woman had given them an individual importance never before attained. Why not let well enough alone? Many, of course, were still swayed by their fierce allegiance to their men, but a change was coming over the woman spirit. Fear was being cast out. Their minds were not good ground for active revolutionary doctrine; their luke-warm adherence to the cause bred a latent antagonism among the men. They ruled the women out from the inner councils, keeping secret from them the military organization. But they still hoped to use their energy in money-raising. Hence Mayern's hint to Ivan.

Veda had but little time for thinking during the morning following her conversation with Ivan. An unusual number of petty annoyances cropped up among the looms. A wave of restlessness seemed to be sweeping over the girls. Hands ordinarily deft and steady grew suddenly clumsy. Threads snapped or tangled for no reason at all, marring the smooth warp of the fabric.

"A poor lot of cotton," Garth Hardwick had explained it.

He was passing through shortly before noon and stopped an instant to inquire if things were running smoothly. He noted the girl's heavy eyes and languid bearing so unlike her usual vigor.

"You are not worrying over such trifles, I trust. You look tired out," he said.

She brightened up to tell him why it had been a trying morning. Some way the mere fact of his interest seemed to relieve her tension.

"Oh no, it happens too often to worry about," she replied. "I'm pretty tired, that's all. I sat up last night with the Schmidt baby—the mother was all in. Have you heard how it is? I'm afraid it won't live the day out."

"No, I hadn't heard—I'll go round right away. They've had the doctor surely and—where was the nurse?"

"Another case—there's been a good deal of sickness this last month. I'll be all right after I get a night's sleep again."

"You shouldn't try to do such things when you must work all day—it's fine of you, but it's too much. I want you to lay off this afternoon and get rested. I'll speak to Mr. Landis, if one nurse can't cover the ground we must get another—temporarily at least."

Hardwick turned at the door and looked back. Veda was bending over a loom helping one of the inefficient. She was the madonna type, he thought.

The sun streaming in through the high windows warmed her delicate pallor into creamy translucence and brought out somber steely glints in the smooth masses of her black hair. He gazed a moment longer than he intended. The knob beneath his hand turned from the outside and he found himself confronting Ivan Lapovich and a stranger, whose face seemed vaguely familiar.

It was the New York delegate, as Garth learned later that day from Veda, and immediately demanded: "Delegate from what?" Veda did not know.

Neither Ivan nor Mayern had expected to encounter the boss. There was a gleam of recognition in Mayern's eye. He had the advantage of Hardwick; he knew exactly when and where he had met him before, but he had not known that he was manager of L. and A. Incorporated. This knowledge put fresh zest into his efforts in Capitol City. He felt confident that Hardwick had not recognized him. Garth had turned so quickly from him to Ivan.

Ivan's glance at the boss was distinctly hostile. After an insolent stare, he turned to see what Veda was doing.

She was still busy with the tangled threads utterly unconscious of the presence of either man.

Ivan gave a half audible grunt in response to Garth's civil good morning and strode toward her. Just then the whistle blew for twelve o'clock. Hardwick hurried back to his office, making his way laboriously through the jostling groups of working men pouring into the halls. He was by no means oblivious to the fact that the Company men were becoming less and less inclined to make way for him—that fewer caps came off, and that the responses to any efforts on his part to be friendly were markedly colder and more surly.

He had received a long letter that same morning from a friend of his in New York state, also a factory manager, which commented on some conditions there.

He had been studying over it. He went to his desk and, taking up the letter, re-read it. His stenographer had gone to lunch.

"The thing I can't make out," his friend wrote, "is exactly what's up now. We pay as high wages as any other firm I know in the same line, and we treat the Union as gingerly as if it were T. N. T., which it is, or I miss my guess. The thing I want to know is whether it's this particular little local branch or whether there's something acutely threatening fermenting all over the country. I'm sending out six other inquiries along with this for data. Good Lord, do you suppose we're on the eve of actual revolution in old U. S. A.? Was it for this the Pilgrims landed and the pioneers broke through the wilderness? Has our experiment at democracy run its course so soon and grown decadent in less than a century and a half? I tell you, Garth, we didn't finish the war in 1918. We killed the old she-dragon but we left her spawn and they're crawling everywhere contaminating or intimidating decent folk.

"The German idea of domination by brute force and the German sophistry that the end justifies the means that we thought we had licked out of human philosophy with

shrapnel, were propagating at home all the time we were fighting abroad—Marxian socialism, idealistic philosophy for college professors and clergymen and the pseudo-intellectual women—class consciousness, labor radicalism in the unions themselves,—red radicalism, sabotage and the I. W. W. in orderly progression! Last, the U. X. W.—hell at our very doors! Oh, say, I've got a dyspepsia—only it's mental. Write and tell me I'm seeing things, Garth, for I'm getting nervous as a woman."

Garth folded the typewritten sheets and thrust them thoughtfully back into their envelope. Then he picked up a flexible paper cutter and bent it back and forth in his fingers. He glanced around his plain office with its substantial oak furniture. He had declined Landis' offer of mahogany though he had an instinctive taste for beautiful surroundings. He had divined that any show of luxury would put him farther out of touch with the men under him. The democracy of the plant was offensively exacting of his kind, though it held itself distinctively aloof from its own kind, if they were not able to travel the pace it set. The employees of L. and A. distinctly looked down upon the foundry workers and the miners, whose wages were as good or better than their own, but whose working conditions and quarters were not so genteel. Human nature maintains its self-respect in two ways. One by reaching up, the other by pushing or pulling "the other fellow" down. The moral fiber seems to be determined by the set of muscles exercised.

Garth shrugged his shoulders after this second reading of the letter. Then he stared at a faint wandering crack in the rough plaster of the wall. The crack drew the eye for it began spontaneously in the middle of nowhere and trailed off into invisibility near the ceiling. He felt that the crack nicely symbolized American democracy. It also had sprung spontaneously in a king-ridden world, and it seemed to be trailing off toward an undetermined vanishing point.

He swung around abruptly in his swivel chair. The throng in front of the building was melting into streams that flowed into the dormitories and cottages. He caught

a glimpse of a knot of men who still lingered on the pavement some fifty feet away. Ivan was in it, and the familiar looking individual he had just encountered. The man's whole figure assailed his attention as something to be recalled. His memory endeavored to place it. Capitol City? No. New York? Michigan? No. France? The man took a few swaggering steps forward. Garth sprang to his feet. "Maynard," German spy, caught and convicted of revealing troop movements to the enemy only to escape mysteriously on the eve of execution.

"What was that wretch doing here?"

Hardwick screened himself beside a filing case and watched him. The same insolent ease—the same crafty narrowing of the lids as he talked—the same long lower lip! There could be no possible doubt that it was Maynard, or rather the man who had enlisted under the name of Maynard. He had most likely been baptized Schmidt or Bauer.

The group of men were listening to him eagerly. Hardwick saw him put an arm familiarly about Ivan's shoulders—saw Ivan laugh uproariously and slap his thigh in appreciation. Hardwick noted two men in the group who did not seem entirely pleased. One, John Hobson, had been a sergeant in his own company. He was a hard-headed industrious man who had always been loyal to him personally. Hobson's brow was contracted. He was evidently puzzled. Another, a younger man, was also plainly weighing the stranger's words.

Garth watched them till they walked on, then telephoned to a plain clothes man the Company occasionally employed and arranged a meeting with him at his club. Still pondering, he got out his run-about and drove off for lunch.

Ivan had been too impatient to wait till evening to finish his interview with Veda and get her started on the fund. Mayern's unexpected appearance at the mills furnished another incentive. It was not Mayern's policy ordinarily to show himself at the plants. He preferred to work more quietly. He had not intended to visit the L. and A. but his morning's mail had disappointed him in the matter of certain promised remittances. His funds were uncomfort-

ably low for a man of his tastes. It occurred to him that he might persuade Ivan to turn over to him the Headquarters' heavy percentage of the fund collected the night before. He meant also to induce him to advance its per cent. of the quota they were still to collect. Ivan had agreed to this readily enough, but he had declined to let the great man slip away after the business was dispatched. He wished to show him Veda—he also desired the official's aid in interesting Veda in the needs of the cause. Last but not least potent as a motive, was his pride in exhibiting the U. X. W. leader to his fellows as his intimate.

So Mayern's habitual caution had been over-ruled. He regretted his rashness the minute he saw Hardwick, although he was absolutely confident that his old superior and enemy had not recognized him. Garth had a good poker face. Mayern felt safe, but he mentally resolved that to the L. and A. should fall the honor of touching the button for their continent wide explosion. He also hoped to arrange details so that Garth Hardwick, late captain of Infantry, should be one of its first victims. He believed that Hardwick had been one of the chief instruments of his degradation in '18.

Veda had met Mayern with that same wide open look of interest which she turned toward every man or woman, and he was subtly flattered by it. He looked her over appraisingly and she found instant favor in his eyes. Ivan did not miss the approval of his kindling eyes and softer tones and was duly elated over it. He became assertively possessive. He fairly exuded ownership. When he was about to promise her unstinted assistance for the movement still diplomatically vague, she interrupted him.

"Not so fast, Ivan. I must know what this is all for. I cannot ask the girls for their money lightly. What is this organization? How are you going about it to get homes? Indeed, I do not see why the girls should be generally interested in a home movement. That is all right for the married women and the men—but the girls—Mr. Mayern—"

She turned to him appealingly, seeing the frown on Ivan's face. "I know I am very stupid this morning but I don't

seem to see. Won't you please tell me a little more about it?"

He explained gallantly and wordily—the gist of which was that their plans were not wholly perfected—the heads of the movement were working on them night and day—but it was a more glorious and comprehensive organization for the interests of the working man than had ever been dreamed of before. The home building was only a part. She—every young girl would be vitally interested. It would assure them a future beyond their utmost hopes. Mayern considered this safely and alluringly vague. "But," he said, "the time was not ripe for explaining it all. Surely she would trust her betrothed's judgment that the plan was sound and would use her remarkable influence in the plant to help them."

His tones were nicely modulated to express all that he cunningly left unsaid. But although Veda felt their caressing, persuasive eloquence, she had a substratum of common sense that stoutly refused to be hoodwinked.

"I'll have to think it over. You see I have been doing my utmost to win the girls for the Erb Act, and if I start to back something else, they will think I'm getting to be a chronic promoter. I am perfectly willing to contribute myself, but I don't see my way to urge the girls or to do any organizing."

And that was the utmost concession either Ivan or Mayern could wring from her.

## CHAPTER VII

### A POSTPONED CONFESSION

MAYERN left town late that same afternoon. As he passed from the Hotel Capitol's bus into the station he attracted Derrick Martin's notice. Derrick was down speeding a reporter San Francisco-ward on a political mission. His first glimpse of the man's imperial mustache suggested that possibly here was Helen's socialist. He noted idly the elegance of his fur-lined overcoat and smart traveling bag as he descended from the vehicle, but the third step of his swaggering walk roused him. "Who in thunder?" He was quicker to place him than Garth had been, though his former encounter with him had been of the briefest. Martin seldom forgot any man he had once observed closely. His corps had been on the ground when "Maynard" had been court-martialed, and he had been struck with the man's daredevil swagger in the teeth of his disgrace and impending death.

The stranger had disappeared inside the station before it occurred to him that it might be his patriotic duty to get a line on the ex-spy.

"After all," he thought, "the war is over, why bother about old offenders?" Derrick had absorbed the easy going American tolerance for the under dog regardless of whether the beast be mad or merely unfortunate.

So Mayern, alias Mayard, boarded his train undisturbed and unaware of this recrudescence of his past.

About a week later Derrick hurriedly scratched off his last editorial at five-thirty P. M. in order to dress for a dinner with Helen at the Country Club. There was to be skating afterwards.

Martin was tragically in love with Helen. She suited him down to the ground, from her willful coppery head to her delicately arched feet. She was of a piece with his

own impressionable fancifulness—a side of his nature he was at pains to conceal from his general acquaintance. Helen could dream dreams even as he—could be gay and sad and sensible and mischievous, all in the twinkling of one evening's incandescent globes. And hidden underneath was another Helen he adored, but could not for the life of him understand.

Derrick had not disturbed himself about this mysterious Helen during their earlier lover's moons. He had always been firmly, and he supposed logically, convinced of the subtlety of the sex. He did not believe now that Dr. Bob knew what he was talking about when he ascribed to women the same instinctive passions and interests that he found in men. He believed women's reasoning powers were mainly intuitive, and resented, as an aspersion on her womanliness, any suggestion that her special refinement and delicacy were acquired characteristics forced on her by convention. He also held obstinately to his British belief that the male was necessarily the thinking *head* of the institution called the family. Although he deemed any man a cad who attempted to restrain or control the woman from any other motive than her own good.

Helen had been swift to detect this contradiction between his beliefs and his working code. She loved his chivalry and condoned his obtuseness. She merely smiled cryptically when he occasionally delivered himself. Derrick, man-like, translated the smiling as secret sympathy with his views which the little vixen was not willing to confess. He thought her feminism merely a fascinating independence, which years and the experiences of life would temper to a fine womanly dignity.

He could not realize that Helen had nursed in a revolutionary spirit with her mother's milk. He could not know that Helen's beliefs were more empirical than his own had ever presumed to be. He was uncritically proud of his inherited British traditions. Helen's life had never been grounded upon tradition. The childish Helen had rebelled against her father's setness and dependence upon convention. At an early age she had also divined her mother's silent revolts, and had sympathized and aligned herself

with them as rapidly as her growing intellect permitted her to discover them. But confirming her mother's influence and even more potent, was her own personal experience, especially in the public school. She had first learned there that the "be good and you will be happy" theory which she had believed an axiom, did not seem to apply to boys. The most graceless small boy she knew was quite the most popular both with teacher and pupils. This injustice of the gods was puzzling. She also observed at an early age that there seemed to be about twice as many things little girls should *not do* as there were for boys. She resented these limitations intensely. The next thing called to her attention was the undue importance of boys. Sundry precocious and not too well brought-up little girls were always whispering about "the boys." Helen already knew some boys—in fact all the boys included in her brother Donald's "crowd," from the ground up. They were usually excessively grimy as to fists and unkempt as to hair and called her "Kid" or "Nell," but pretty generally tolerated her and frequently pleaded for her when Donald didn't want her "bothering round." She romped with these boys, acquired their slang, and fetched or carried for them patiently as the price of being included. But she discovered nothing to justify the prostrating attitude of her mates to "The boys!"

She was initiated into what her elders called sex, but which to her was merely a new field of competition governed by rules that upset further her faith in the divine order of things, when she was about twelve years old. No matter how good and studious you were, you weren't really anybody unless the boys liked you—unless they liked you individually better than they did other girls. And this was something you were not to tell your mother about. Helen felt that this was not fair play for girls, but not being minded to be left behind in a race, she pursued the ideal scientifically through the grades and High School. The sum of the knowledge she thus acquired, was, that the boys' affections were not to be won by being either good or studious. That while there did not seem to be any deducible rule, yet being pretty and wearing very bright

hair ribbons and being just a little bad and, above all, getting unobtrusively in their way as much as possible so they couldn't help noticing you, were all more or less effective.

During her freshman year at High School all this was brought home to her most unpleasantly. The most popular girl in school was undeniably the biggest liar, one of the poorest students, the most flashily dressed damsel of sixteen to be observed on the school campus. Yet the boys vied with each other for the honor of carrying her books. Helen became so disturbed about this phenomenon that she confided to her mother to her great profit. Margaret had the courage to be truthful with her girl child. She frankly admitted that the vulgar girl's attractiveness was contrary to all rules. But she insisted that the finenesses of life paid in the long run. She added at the last, "Mark my words, next year Dorothy won't be as popular as this, and by the time you are a senior, she will either have dropped out of school or be a byword."

Margaret knew she prophesied safely for this was an extreme case, fortunately for the moral she was trying to point. But there were numerous other cases not quite so bad where the girl came through triumphantly in competition with the cleverest, the prettiest, the finest girls in school. But her wisdom saved the day for Helen, though the young girl was still puzzled and not a little resentful over the injustice of such happenings.

During her university course she did more comparative research work along the line of social values. She discovered she could hold her own in any study with the men if she were willing to dig hard enough. She also discovered that to give up her entire time to digging was not likely to bring her anything more profitable than a present headache and a teacher's certificate in the future. She proved to her own satisfaction that men did not want a girl to be a shark at either science or mathematics, regarding these as their own special province. That they regarded it as a poor joke if she beat them in debating or public-speaking and that they had things so nicely adjusted that a girl never got to be student body president or editor-in-chief, no matter how preëminent her qualifications. In

fact she seldom attained any prominence through merit alone in a co-educational college or society, but always largely through her popularity with the males. And yet people said girls had precisely the same opportunities as boys. Helen adapted herself to conditions as she found them but she never ceased to resent the necessity for flattering the man, and for concealing her own abilities when they happened to be greater than his. The chances of her feminism disappearing as she grew older, had Derrick but known it, were not good.

So Derrick was poignantly in love with a girl whose inner thoughts he did not know at all. He was romantically in love. Had his newspaper associates been privileged to eaves-drop when he was with Helen, they would have been too astonished to laugh. A certain up-to-the-minute hardness, his fighting front, was dropped and only his Irish humor saved him from being a love-sick swain.

The telephone in the city editor's office was too much at the mercy of the girl downstairs for his talks with his fiancée. He squandered a nickel for a private booth each time. His wheedling for the occasion of this dinner had been characteristic.

"Nellen!—this you? Everything serene? Good! Helen, there are four and twenty lonesome little snow birds sitting on a fence above the Country Club pond clamoring for Helen. Yes, I've just been waited on by a delegation. And, Nellen, it's going to be a witching night. There will be a million sparkles when the moon rises at seven-thirty precisely. I have the latest advice that she is on time. We'll just have a snug dinner at the farthestmost table—in the corner next the loving cups—you know. Won't you—will you?

"Can't! Hang the meeting! Your mother can take somebody else. D-e-ar, it would be a crime to pass up such a night! I knew you'd be a sport. I'll be there at seven on the dot. I am sending six—can you hear them sizz!—to be taken separately or in concussion at your own discretion."

Derrick hung up the receiver and began to whistle. Then he remembered where he was and gave place to a gum-

chewing miss who was impatiently waiting her turn outside the booth.

Helen DeWitt opened the front door and ran half way down the walk before Derrick was out of the car. Such waiting watchfulness would have been flattering had not Derrick been gripped with a secret fear that she did it to forestall his greeting kiss. This unpleasant idea made him hot and cold by turns.

His eyes glinted as he handed her in with reassuring formality. He tucked the robe about her solicitously and started the engine. He conversed decorously half the way out. He asked after her father and mother and compared notes as to the progress of the Erb Act campaign. Then Helen broke the ice of this highly proper conversation. She had been eying him contemplatively. She had not previously mustered up the courage to tell him of her adventure at Banks Hall; the incident had ended too ignominiously. But she was about to take the plunge now.

"Derrick, I—"

"Yes?" he turned to her inquiringly.

The grave tenderness in his eyes disturbed her. Why must she be always putting herself in the wrong? She was realizing with a pang that this Banks Hall affair would hurt him more than most men. To have put herself in such a position directly in the face of his remonstrance—what imp had possessed her any way? She knew he would be chivalrously tender and forgiving but the indiscretion would affront all his traditions—not to mention the disregard for his wishes. The case began to look blacker the nearer she came to submitting it to her judge. She resented having to have a judge. Why should engaged people meddle with each other's affairs anyhow? She almost made a face as she met his eyes searching hers. She impulsively decided to postpone the evil moment.

"I—I heard some bad news to-day," she hesitated.

"What is it, dear?"

"Minette—Minette Doty—Veda's chum—has gone away."

He did not grasp the force of this. "Well?"

"And nobody knows where—or why. Veda is worried

sick. It was a week ago—Mr. Hardwick has been trying to trace her for Veda. She departed bag and baggage without saying a word to any one except that she gave notice at the works and collected her pay just before she took the train. She did it all between one and five. Veda came home from work to find Minette's drawers and closet empty, and a slip of paper with 'Good-by, Veda, I'm sorry to disappoint you for you sure have been good to me.' pinned to her dresser. Poor Veda—she seems to think it's all her fault."

Derrick's mind was reverting to Jock's easy conceit. "Jock Landis, I suppose, the young beast!"

"That is what Veda thinks, but I'm not so sure."

They slid by the snow-heaped trees and the arc lights of the next two blocks in silence.

"Why aren't you?" Derrick demanded.

"I don't know exactly only I always thought there was a lot to Minette in spite of her flutteriness. She's been at our house a good deal, you know, with Veda."

"I remember Jock said he was leaving on the morning train in order to reach his frat house for some doings—she must have taken the 5:05 the same day. You said Tuesday, didn't you?"

"I don't know what I said, but it was Tuesday—yes, I'm sure—last Tuesday."

"Hm-m-n, I was down at the station that night—I didn't see anything of her. By the way, I think I did see your socialist friend, at any rate a man with the Kaiser's mustache. But going back to Jock"—Derrick was watching the road, he did not see the wave of color that flooded Helen's face—"if he didn't want her to go on the same train why did he let her start the same day? Pretty feeble camouflage I call that."

"Maybe he didn't know anything about it."

"Maybe, but it looks like a put up job. You think she followed him? Is that your notion of there being something to Minette?" He looked at her rather sharply now.

The look did not escape Helen and she perversely gave him precisely what he was suspecting. When her con-

science troubled her she usually stifled it in a cloud of naughtinesses.

"Why not? It would show that faithfulness your sex always dotes upon—sort of patient Griselda business."

She met the second searching glance he sent in her direction with demure innocence.

Derrick was caught.

"Still there is a difference in running after a man who is your husband and one who isn't," he objected mildly.

Helen was radiant.

"Of course, it shows real heroism—don't you think so?" She looked off into space soulfully.

Derrick took another look.

"You imp of Satan!" He deliberately slowed up the car, pulled out a pocket memorandum book and added another mark to a page already filled formidably. "That makes sixty-three!"

"Sixty-three what?" Helen ceased giggling to regard the page with interest.

"Never mind what!" he retorted, pretending to be angry.

"Are you really going to try to get even, Derrick?" Helen leaned toward him with mirthful, coaxing eyes.

"Yes, I'm going to beat you—it's an ancient custom of our race."

She subsided for a moment.

"I rather think I should like it, Derrick," she answered reflecting. "When did you think of beginning?"

This trenched perilously near the sore subject between them. But Helen could not think of any way to turn the meaning without emphasizing it.

"How should a mere man presume to know," he retorted lightly. He did not intend to spoil this evening if he could help it. But he could not quite succeed in keeping the hurt out of his face.

Helen invariably had the maternal impulse to pet him when he looked sad. She wanted with all her tender heart to say the satisfying thing now. But the night-marish ogre quartered in the back of her mind seemed to grin at her

malevolently. She knew the lovable Derrick by her side would seem to coarsen into an unpleasantly carnal specter the instant he caressed her, despite her firmest resolves.

She racked her brains for some excuse to reassure him and to exculpate herself for her hanging back. If she could have told him the whole truth he might have exorcised the demon. Manifestly, she said to herself, she could not tell him the whole truth for both her father's and mother's sake. She was beginning to wonder if it were even worth while to disturb him further by confessing her escapade of the U. X. W. meeting with its humiliating ending.

Her going to the meeting had been the veriest bit of dare deviltry due partly to her own dissatisfied restlessness—the pain of her strained relation with Derrick was daily cutting deeper—and partly to the lively curiosity Mayern had bred in her with his enthusiastic radicalism. She had wondered if he could be one of the mysterious U. X. W's. She had learned of the meeting through a lucky chance and had speedily resolved to attend and crow over Derrick later.

The incident had not ended according to schedule. Mayern's presence had made her uneasy especially after she had caught his eye. When he carefully closed the door behind them after leaving the hall, she knew he must have recognized her. His first words made it a certainty.

"To what do we owe the pleasure of your presence, Miss DeWitt?"

She parried. "I understood you to say you were not a U. X. W., Mr. Mayern."

The German's prehensile lower lip had drawn back disagreeably.

"I was not aware that I was accountable to Miss DeWitt for my actions or beliefs."

Helen flushed.

"Nor I to Mr. Mayern," she retorted haughtily.

"The cases are hardly parallel. You intrude in disguise into a secret organization. It is an organization that does not brook such intrusions. Will you kindly state your motives or must I report your case to my associates?"

Helen had hesitated defiantly but the corridor was dim and lonely. Mayern barred her exit and the look in his

eyes was threatening. She decided to temper dignity with discretion.

"Idle curiosity, Mr. Mayern. Your organization is so mysterious, it invites curiosity."

"How did you learn the place and the time of the meeting?"

Again Helen had hesitated.

"Purely by accident, and a lucky guess. Our maid asked to take her day off to-morrow instead of to-day because her brother had to go to a meeting at Banks Hall to-night and couldn't go out home with her. I had heard that many varieties of radicals met at Banks Hall—I took a chance."

Mayern had scrutinized her closely during this speech. She met his direct gaze without evasion. He seemed satisfied.

"I should not advise you to repeat this adventure—or to talk about it," he said meaningly. "May I conduct you to a car?"

"You need not trouble—my run-about is parked a few doors away round the corner."

"You will permit me to see you safely to it."

Mayern's courtesy was unimpeachable till he handed her gravely into the machine. They were on a side street—there was no one near. Mayern felt that this was a golden opportunity to teach this daring young lady a lesson wholly agreeable to himself. He leaned forward apparently to close the door of the run-about. Instead, he caught her by the shoulders and kissed her full on the mouth with brutal force.

Helen struck out blindly. He was too quick for her. He slammed the door to with a vicious laugh, lifted his hat mockingly, and was gone.

The insult of that kiss seared into emotions already raw. Helen had loathed herself for days. She brooded over it in connection with her morbid repulsion of Derrick. For the space of two days she reproached herself that she had blamed him for what was patently her own abnormality. There must be something wrong with her that called out the baser side of the man if an entire stranger like Mayern dared—she shuddered at the remembrance. Still,

if that baser side was always latent even in such a man as Derrick—and her father—Helen had not needed her mother so desperately since the disillusioning episode of Dorothy's vulgar charm. And this time every obligation of fine feeling prevented her going to her mother for counsel.

To-night she was dumb in the face of Derrick's last delicately barbed words.

Derrick understood or thought he did. He increased his speed and swung up the Country Club drive at a stiff pace. But a shadow had fallen on their spirits and was not to be lifted by any attempts at sprightly chatter on her part or by Derrick's elaborate efforts to keep her amused. The dinner near the loving cups was a flat failure. The food was tasteless—the noise and merriment at the tables about them seemed to isolate them from a joy common to every one except themselves.

When Helen disappeared into the dressing room for her wraps after the lugubrious feast, Derrick was tempted to give up the fight. But there was a dogged tenacity about him that hung despite his better judgment. He bolstered it up with Dr. Bob's admonition. "Nellen should not bluff him. If she were going to turn him down, she owed it to him to show her hand. He meant that she should."

Helen came back from the dressing room conscience-stricken because she had spoiled their evening so thoughtlessly. She, too, was asking herself if it had better not end here and now. But she was not reckoning with the passionate longing that made her cling to Derrick in the very teeth of the distortions worked by her own imagination.

They went out silently side by side into the sparkling night. The moon was already propped in the crotch of two snow-covered peaks. It sent shafts of radiance across the timbered slopes above the pond, and branch and twig fretted the snow into lacy intricacies of crossing shadows.

Derrick slipped his arm through hers and helped her along the icy path. They were silent still, but the night was eloquent. The sharp air that filled their lungs and sent the blood racing through their fit young limbs, started impulses that must find expression sooner or later.

Derrick knelt and strapped on her skates. They were

the first at the pond and the world was their solitude, shared only by a fleeing rabbit they had startled from the brush. Nellen could almost feel Derrick's steaming breath on the hand that lay idly on her lap. She had pulled off her mitten to readjust a loose lock when she sat down on the low bench. She looked down on his bent head and shoulders. There might not be one superfluous inch or ounce of Derrick, but it was good honest brawn—every fiber of it. She was seized with the impulse to touch him. She forced her cold little hand to lie quiescent.

"Is it all right, Nellen?" The last strap adjusted, he glanced up. Then he took the cold hand in his and chafed it an instant, and kissed the soft palm fervently before he sprang lightly to his feet. And Helen, anomaly that she was, wished he had kissed her on the lips.

They swung off together along the ice. Derrick held her close, but not too close, supported her, guarded every step, despite their swifter and swifter gliding. They turned round the bend and raced on past the little island in the north end of the pond and the poetry in Derrick bubbled in spite of his efforts to be decorous.

"Nellen, mavourneen, your hair is all red gold—it would assay a hundred per cent. pure—and the stars are singing in your very soul for I can see the light in your eyes. Helen, Nellen, why are you shutting me out from your gladness? What have I done to have the door of your heart slammed in my face this way?" He was whispering this last, half pleading, half ironic, and his tones were pulling Helen like cords.

"Oh, Derrick, nothing—I'm not—that is I don't mean to—but I can't! Don't you see?"

Naturally Derrick did not see but the moonlight was against any literal interpretation of her words. He held her a little more firmly and swung in toward a jutting point ahead. Steadying himself against some roots that hung down from the bank above, he clasped her in his arms and bent to kiss her. She drooped against him and met his eyes, all soft tenderness. Derrick swore this to himself afterwards—but when his lips pressed hers, her yielding figure suddenly grew rigid. The specter had come between

them once more and Derrick cursed dumbly nature, and modern education, and American feminism, and himself, and the day that he was born—but the glory of the night was quenched.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ALONE IN FRISCO

**M**INETTE watched the porter insert her smart little blue hat into the time-honored paper bag, apathetically. She had strained every nerve during the day to make her arrangements and to get away without exciting suspicion. She could not face Veda. Her courage was fitful—evanescent. A dozen times that day a trifle would have stayed her. But circumstances seemed to have favored her every move. Now, she was spent—depressed. She felt as if she were some inert thing the winds had tossed about aimlessly.

"Any way I don't need to think until to-morrow," she comforted herself, as the train slowly gathered momentum and with a ponderous thudding pulsation swept past the last yard signal and took its untrammelled way swiftly toward the western outskirts of Capitol City.

She scarcely yet realized what she was doing. Her impulse to flight had come so suddenly; she had lingered so long in self-deluding indecision drugged alternately by her passion and her hopes, that when realization of her actual situation had come the night before, she had been panic-stricken. She had been driven to act quickly by the dread lest she should not have the courage to act at all.

She settled back on the figured green plush upholstery of the Pullman seat and closed her eyes. She wanted to shut out the world inside the car and the too familiar landscape outside. She wanted to be alone. She wanted more than this—she wanted to cajole her screaming nerves and protesting heart into quiescence. She struggled to think about nothing at all, but she succeeded only in making a screen of her mind upon which the events of the day and the preceding night were projected in an unending rotation.

She had risen promptly that morning—played her little part even to choking down the coffee and toast at breakfast, then had slipped off to the city instead of going to the works, and had hunted up Madame Marie. She told just enough of her tale to rouse Madame's interest. She need not have told any but for form's sake. Madame Marie knew her world. She filled in all the gaps in Minette's narrative accurately, planning swiftly for her while she listened.

She had known Minette for some time—had once tried to warn her, but the look in the girl's eyes stopped her. As well try to warn a sleep-walker. For months Minette had not lived in the physical world about her. She had eaten and slept, and worked her tedious hours at the factory, automatically. Her brain functioned only in its love. Strange crooning harmonies vibrated through her as she worked at the humming looms. Longings, anticipations, unaccountable pulsating joy were hers during every waking second and found their climax when she flung herself into Jock's eager arms. And as her ears seemed to sensitize her whole being to harmony, her eyes opened the windows of her soul to undreamed of radiances. A flood of light poured from her eyes—seemed to exude from her glowing, transparent skin. Madame Marie, seeing, had marveled and held her peace. Like Veda, she found herself almost envying her this short-lived bliss. It was worth suffering to be able to feel so potently. Thus it happened that Madame Marie speculated not a little—shook her head—sighed, and went about her daily business with a tinge of foreboding after any chance meeting with the girl.

Even if she could break off this infatuation—blot out the dream—save Minette to be the dissatisfied wife of some worthy and common-place workman, would she be doing her a kindness? The old Irishwoman shrugged her shoulders cynically. Let the child bask in her little hour of heaven—standards were not so rigid as in her own youth—time enough for the workman and the prose of life after the rainbow had faded. In her heart she felt confident the Blessed Virgin could be depended upon to put up a little special plea for Minette because of her much loving now,

and the purifying anguish that must inevitably follow. So when Minette came to her for help she hardly listened to her transparently artful story—she knew it all at first glance—much more letter perfectly than Minette herself.

Stopping only to give some brief words of direction to the girls in her beauty parlors, she put on her hat, tucked her fat arm comfortably through the girl's slender one, and took command of the expedition.

She helped her to dicker with old Schneider for the sale of the cape. She wormed nine hundred and fifty dollars out of him sorely against his will—but the ermine was superb. She advised Minette against taking her money in bills, and had her put the bulk of it in a draft. Then she smoothed the way for her as if she had been her own daughter. Directing her to a quiet boarding house in San Francisco she suggested carelessly, with no hint of any suspicion, that since she was a young girl going to a strange city alone, it might be just as well to be Mrs. Minette Doty or, if she would rather take a new name, she was welcome to use hers, O'Reilly, which was good enough for a queen though it didn't serve as well for her trade as a French one.

"Sure the women like the Madame—it makes 'em feel chic—and the men they purr over the Marie. It makes 'em feel so free and easy like. And I'm never the worse for it. But mind ye," Madame sank her voice confidentially, "when I've made my bit I'm going back to California to some little town where I can be Mrs. Timothy O'Reilly, and I'm going to have a bit place of our own and quarrel with Tim over the cabbages, and if any of your noovo rich females or ogling pests in breeches so much as look over that fence, I'll belabor them with my best broom—and it'll be a good one you can just bet!"

She rambled on loquaciously, determined to give Minette no time to think. When a life must be torn from its accustomed moorings, it is much wiser to act than to consider.

"Molly'll give you a job right off the bat for my sake. I'll telegraph her I'm sending you. She's a bit sharp-tongued but she's a good heart—you'll get on slick as a whistle once you're used to her ways."

The whole scheme seemed safe and easy so long as Madame Marie was at her elbow, but when Minette returned to the L. and A. for lunch, she felt as if her secret and her plans were printed in inch letters on her face for every one to read. How they would gloat—the ones who had envied her her prettiness, and her airs, and that ermine cape! Not all of them. In her bitter distress she did not realize how many would be genuinely sorry. The girls of the L. and A. were a good sort in the main with much *esprit de corps*. It had been one of Veda's hobbies that they should all stick together helpfully. Why organize, if they were not willing to put their petty jealousies aside and stand together when need required?

All Veda's admonitions had seemed rather trivial to Minette because she had not intended to be one of the girls for long. She had intended to marry Jock, and—now! Well, she had lived through the afternoon some way, had notified the matron at the dormitory and collected her wages at the factory. She sent her trunk away while the girls were still at the mills. She had gone to the station and boarded the train without attracting attention. It was done. But what was Veda thinking now? For the moment this was her most nagging thought. Veda, who had befriended her, had mothered her, and tried her mistaken best to make her into another Veda. Minette laughed a little bitterly at this—there were just as many butterflies as wrens in a summer. Surely God didn't mean all girls to be sturdy, steady little brown wrens. She had so longed for color and flowers and sunshine and she had fluttered joyously a little way—even now—looking out upon icy peaks that pierced infinite expanses of blue heaven—upon wintry wastes of snow—the remembrance was bitterly sweet. The houses of Capitol City had vanished behind them. How many times had she flown in Jock's plane over these same stretches! Last spring, when the first verdure burgeoned from the seamed brown earth. Last summer when they looked down through panting heat upon nature's luxuriance already beginning to wither with the effort of fruition. In autumn when life died gloriously in a riot of flame. And this snow was its pall—

yet beneath this pall, surely life slept only to rouse again.

"I don't care—I'm not sorry—not a bit sorry!" She said it aloud defiantly.

Her neighbor across the aisle, who had been watching her idly with a keen appreciation of her delicate beauty, understood perfectly that she was talking to herself but he was quick to seize the opportunity to scrape acquaintance.

"I beg your pardon, Miss—were you addressing me?"

Minette shook her head and closed her eyes again.

The man smiled over his rebuff and watched her face with increasing appreciation of its faint tinting and delicate profile. He did not fail to speculate as to the cause of the disfiguring brownish green hollows under her eyes. They would soon disappear in a young girl, he knew. And rid of them, she would be an altogether delectable bit of woman flesh. He meant to make her acquaintance before that train pulled into the Oakland Mole.

He was so absorbed in Minette that he quite neglected to notice how closely a talkative, rubicund individual a few seats in front was observing him. Not many years since this traveler had been obliged to enter every room and train cautiously, taking careful notice of each person in it. He had grown careless of late. After all, the war was several years behind and the American public had plenty of fresh troubles of its own without raking up by-gones. He did not believe any one would disturb him if he were recognized as a former German spy. Mayern had not been seriously disturbed when he met Hardwick though he had deemed it best to cut his stay in Capitol City short because of that encounter.

An expansive colored waiter came through the car announcing dinner. Minette let the first call, and the second, go by unheeded. The man across the aisle also waited. When the last call came she roused herself languidly. Her mouth was dry but she must eat—for *its* sake she must eat. She *must* keep up—a fleeting tenderness lighted her drawn face.

Mayern saw it and wondered. The girl intrigued his attention. Who and what was she? He could not make

out. He followed close behind into the dining car, and as luck would have it, was seated at the same table. Minette was entirely unaware of his presence. He might have been a waiter or one of the new pickle casters just coming into vogue again, for all the impression he made upon her. She picked at the overabundance of the table d'hôte dinner lifelessly. Mayern ostentatiously handed her a pepper and salt she did not need and asked if he should not summon the waiter to fill her water glass.

She did not take the trouble to raise her eyes as she thanked him. The waiters and the public dining place had turned her thoughts once more to her dinner with Jock the night before. Her tortured mind reviewed it, detail by detail—the violets Jock had brought her—the heavy food-laden air as they entered the grill—her hopes and her foolish scheming to carry Jock off his feet. Her poorly contrived little house of cards which had toppled about her ears before she had fairly tasted her soup. She set to work to picture it all again—to argue with herself that if she had not been so abrupt about broaching marriage to Jock—perhaps, or if she had told him about the child he might have pitied her and consented. Still she knew better. Jock had been too pampered to know much about pity. He would have been appalled, irritated at the disgrace. He might have given her even more money possibly, but he would surely have turned from her in hot distaste.

Now she was turning from him. When he thought of her again after a week or two, would he be hurt, she wondered, to find that she had vanished? She flattered herself that not one soul knew where she had gone except staunch Madame Marie, who was shrewd enough to throw any one off the trail. After all it was better this way—Jock would surely long for her again soon. If he had married her—if he had—sooner or later in spite of anything she could make of herself or do—he would have hated her. Jock hated anything that hampered his own liberty. No, it was better—as it was—she was glad she had acted at once. And because she was glad the tears dripped down into her

salad. Unfortunately the tear ducts are not controlled by the reason.

She gave up trying to eat after this catastrophe and started to signal the waiter.

This was Mayern's golden opportunity. "Let me settle it for you, Miss; you can repay me when you are feeling better."

She was grateful for this thoughtfulness, but she remembered by this time that there was a fixed charge for the meal. She brokenly declined his offer, and laying the sum beside her plate and the waiter's tip near it, returned to the Pullman.

She was young and utterly weary and the tears eased the tension of her nerves. After a little she slept heavily and the next morning awakened, not wholly refreshed, but with a dogged resilience that seemed as much physical as mental. She ate her breakfast with some relish. She responded half-heartedly to the overtures of an omnipresent small boy who was fascinated by her golden hair and rose-leaf prettiness.

Mayern across the aisle watched the youngster's gyrations with cynical amusement.

"My mother's hair is brown," the boy remarked, stopping at her seat after passing by several times reluctantly.

"Is it?" indifferently.

"Yep—I think your hair is prettier."

"Do you?"

"Yep—lots—say, do you do somefin to it? Mother said she bet you did."

"Do you do something to yours? Your hair is yellow, too," Minette retorted with a gleam of animation.

"Nope—I don't—but Mother puts some sutff in the water when she washes it—maybe—do you s'pose it does?" The boy teetered a while and considered, holding fast to the back of Minette's seat with both hands.

"My pa's hair's a teenty bit like yours, only it's sort of—faded. 'Tain't shiny like yours. I'm going to look like Pa when I grow up."

This started Minette off on a new train of thought—

another disagreeably insistent train of thought—that made little boys without fathers seem deprived and piteous.

The boy made several other observations, but she paid no attention and he finally departed discouraged.

A little later Mayern bought two copies of the morning's paper at a station and handed one to her with an apology for intruding. He was still wondering what her trouble was and to what social station she belonged. Her grief had lent her a dignity and detachment that made it exceedingly difficult to classify her.

He studied her lazily, luxuriously, beneath half dropped lids. If she were attainable why not? He could not think of any more agreeable relaxation than to ascertain whether she were attainable.

Late in the afternoon he deliberately went over and asked her if she would object to talking for a few minutes.

Minette had been dozing a little, and had but just straightened up and picked up a magazine the news boy had dumped in her seat. Her first impulse was to decline curtly but a wave of her old recklessness caught her. She motioned him to the seat opposite and faced him unsmiling but inquiring.

He was punctiliously respectful. He was still at a loss for the proper cue. He tried the weather and San Francisco and the grotesqueries of women's fashions, without overcoming her inertness. Then he ventured to be sympathetic assuming that she had parted from her family—he trusted the separation was not for long.

She took the cue he gave her. "It might be for several years."

But, perhaps there was to be a wedding at the other end of her journey—there were compensations even for parting.

A spasm of grief convulsed Minette's face in spite of her at this sally, and Mayern knew there was a lover in the case. Ahem, "some years"—then he was not dead—more likely a quarrel—a little delicate flattery might ease such a wound. He had much intimate knowledge of women. He had begun early back in the Fatherland when he had clanked his officer's spurs night after night in the cafés of

Berlin before the exigencies of the struggle sent him into the field of espionage. With the utmost savoirfaire, he tried to divert her thoughts from her trouble. He had seen much of the world and could spin yarns of adventure with the best; his plausibility had always stood him well in hand.

Minette felt herself gently transported to far countries. She was given a glimpse of the battlefields as he had seen them just after the great war. He led her artfully through the shops of the rue de la Paix, he took her to the Riviera—to Florence—to Rome, and her youth responded to the magic. For two hours she forgot or almost forgot—even Jock.

She remembered Jock abruptly when Mayern asked her to be his guest at dinner. Her first impulse was to refuse—her second a fatalistic determination to take everything the gods offered her. She accepted sweetly and roused sufficiently to be, if not her usual sprightly self, at least responsive. It soothed her hurt self respect subtly to have this man of the world care for her society. She argued resentfully that she could make herself fit for the best if she only had half a chance.

Mayern followed up the dinner by offering his services to see her to her destination in San Francisco in case she were not expecting friends. Minette decided that she was expecting friends. Then he asked for her address and permission to call later. She told him she should be at the Fairmount, the threshold of which she never expected to cross. Minette's brain was working again but not quite quickly enough. She forgot that she was now Mrs. Minette O'Reilly, and told him her name was Smith.

He tried to possess himself of her bags as she left the train, but he was forestalled by the stout rubicund gentleman who had stepped off with the porter and deftly sorted Minette's suit-case from the heap.

"Permit me, Madam, to carry this on to the ferry for you—it is some walk."

Mayern glared at him but his homely face had inspired confidence. Minette acquiesced and he fell into step with her, talking volubly about the unnecessary inconveniences

of travel in general and the special abominations of the Oakland Mole in particular. When they arrived on the boat he settled her comfortably on the upper deck and departed. She saw nothing further of him or of Mayern, and was grateful.

As a matter of fact the German had decided to spend the night in Berkeley to see a committee there before crossing the Bay. Minette at the Fairmount could be looked up later. She had not noticed when he left the stream of ferry passengers to catch a car, but the rubicund man had, and hurried from the ferry to try to overtake him before he disappeared into a yellow or red interior. It was most important that he should know which color Mayern chose, even if he did not succeed in boarding it himself. But he was too late, the parked cars were already whizzing away and the man was gone.

The rubicund man kicked himself gently for his ineffable stupidity and tried to guess which way his quarry had gone. It was not his custom to commit such a professional solecism as this. He was held to be uncannily astute. He talked so freely that the most hardened criminal never dreamed he could have anything to conceal. He was benevolently interested in his kind. He carried pictures of his wife and six children about with him in a tooled leather case which he exhibited proudly as the handiwork of his second daughter. His business at home was open and above board. He manufactured and sold an unimpeachable glue. His aim was to introduce it into every office and home in the broad land. He told you this soon after he met you. As a matter of fact his glue had served to introduce him into homes and numerous other coveted vantages, where a stranger would normally find an entrée denied him. He was an abnormally useful man to the L. and A., also to the chief of police of Capitol City.

. . . . .

It was nearing eleven p. m. when Minette reached the boarding house on a remote side street, to which Madame Marie had directed her. It looked respectable, and had a

garden in the rear and a pocket handkerchief of earth in front filled with scarlet- and magenta-colored geraniums, the discordant colors blending more happily by electric light than beneath the sun's rays the following morning. It has always been a matter of speculation to the outsider to know why the California house-holder invariably seeks to combine these two uncombinable tints unless nature there is so opulent that she continually tempts to a miracle.

Thanks to Madame Marie, Minette was expected, and her room was ready. Her landlady had gone to a movie but the maid was impressed by Minette's smart appearance. She also could not quite classify her. While in doubt she was most respectful. "Just push the button in the hall if you need anything more, Mrs. O'Reilly."

Minette winced at the name but covered it with a smile and a friendly "Thank you."

When the maid had closed the door she felt as if she had been shut in with her own self for all time. This was not quite exact—she was deprived even of her own society, for the young woman who must sleep and plan inside these four walls could have but little in common with the airy Minette who had motored and dined and soared with Jock Landis through many tinselled days in Capitol City. She was no longer a butterfly with wings—she was an ant that must crawl diligently to add to her little hoard for the dimly comprehended emergencies of the future.

She looked disconsolately about her. The wall paper was flamboyant. The rugs on the stained red-wood floor had been toned down to an un contemplated neutrality by alternate applications of dust and laundry soap through a trying period of years. Golden oak, and birch with a mahogany finish, mingled sociably in the furniture. One chair had come through the earthquake with its strength unimpaired, but its beauty much damaged. The linen on the bed was clean. Minette hung up her outer garments carefully in the closet, left her other wear in a heap where she stepped out of it, and crept shivering into bed to cry herself to sleep.

The next morning in the half light of seven-thirty, some one tapped at her door. She answered the knock half

awake. An over-rouged, black-haired girl about her own age overflowed her corsets and her normal allotment of space, in plump cordiality.

"You, Mrs. O'Reilly? Mrs. Hardy said I was to pack you along with me if you liked, seeing as you're a stranger. You ain't dressed and we ought to hurry, but the old lady'll be easy your first morning. C'n I help you any?"

Minette had planned to devote her first day to unpacking, to depositing her draft in the bank Madame Marie had suggested—and to the luxury of grief. She hesitated, her glance wandered from the waiting girl back to her room. She decided she would go crazy penned up there all day. She returned the girl's familiar friendliness in kind.

"You're dear to take so much trouble—I'll hurry—if you can wait."

"I'll wait in the dining room. Do you want your egg boiled or fried? I can give the order and have it ready for you."

Minette was already untying the ribbon in her night dress.

"Boiled—is the dining room on the first floor?"

When they had boarded the surface car for the shop, her companion indulged her curiosity.

"I s'posed when Mrs. Hardy said you was married that he'd most likely died in the war. We've got two war widows. One wears a gold service star set with rubies—that is you couldn't tell 'em from rubies—they're to stand for drops of blood, you know. Kind of pretty idea, ain't it? Darlene's real sentimental about him—he was a sergeant. She ain't never married again, but hear me Eliza! She's a heap better off as she is. She's got three steadies, and having a Mrs. to her name, makes her seem kind of genteel and settled, so's people aren't always watchin' her to see if she c'n nab a man, the way they do the rest of us. You ain't a grass, air ye?" She returned to her inquiry.

Minette searched her mind for data as to how Madame Marie had disposed of Mr. O'Reilly. She could not remember so she decided to take a chance. Her clothes were much too gay to accompany a sleeve band, even if she had thought of one. "They had quarreled and separated—

that was why she was so anxious to leave Capitol City." She faltered out this hastily devised history so hesitatingly that her auditor was all sympathy.

"You sure had rotten luck, but don't worry. Maybe he'll be honing for you pretty soon and trailin' out here with a wad big enough to show you the town. Frisco's some little burg to see if the gent has the stuff—take it from me. But lawsy most of the fellers I know have to pay such big dues to the Unions, they ain't any too much left to show a girl a good time with. And then there's this new society they're all joining but won't talk about—like it was a sort of Jesus Christ business. Even Tippy Gonoski, the pitcher's in it. He swings his swagger stick into the shop to see Softy Hartman. Why the girl's that soft she cushions every place she lights—good he ain't a flyer! I've seen 'em comin' in on the ferry at two A. M. an' him a hanging his big gourd on her little shoulder and she a smilin' like she'd just had a Christmas present—and they say she goes into her aunt's kitchen and cooks him a Thanksgiving dinner every Sunday. Law she'll get over that—the little fool! Why, what's the matter? You're that white! You ain't given to fainting are ye? You'd ought to take Snappy Sarsparilla—it'll build you up. I've got a couple of spoonfuls left in a bottle—I'll bring it in to-night."

Minette scarcely heard what her companion was saying. The car was crossing Geary. About twenty feet away in a machine sat Jock lolling beside a girl in costly furs who was driving. He was talking to her with that caressing air of proprietorship she knew so well. Minette turned from the window and looked at her companion vacantly.

The girl put her arm about her shoulders. A man across the aisle got up and opened the window behind her.

"Oh," she said with a little forced laugh, "I'm all right, I've never fainted in my life."

And the color soon returned to her face. She glanced again through the opposite window, the auto was moving slowly now. Presently she could read its number as it lost itself in the vanishing stream of vehicles. It was 97009.

Minette had secretly hoped that she might some time chance on Jock—some remote time when she could feast her eyes on him without his seeing her. But that it should be so soon—that he should be toying with another forty-eight hours after he had left hot kisses on her lips—her mind reverted to the snow-covered wastes of the desert. Perhaps, there was no life beneath the imprisoning ice—perhaps there never had been any fruitful life—only barren stretches of sand and sage-brush and abiding desolation.

The invigorating tang of sea air assailed her nostrils as she stepped from the car. The hurrying throngs on the pavement were like an onward moving wave. Banked on the corner near her were violets and carnations, poppies and roses—all the prodigal California bloom—with a smiling olive-skinned Italian youth luring her to buy. Minette stopped and bought two bunches of violets. She drew in the fragrance of the massed flowers on the pavement hungrily. The fragrance was a living fragrance—the air from the sea was life-giving and she was young. No! No! No! She would not kill hope—she could not, if she would.

Five minutes later she followed Violet Ann, cheerily accosted as Vi—An by her mates, into Mrs. Hardy's manicuring parlors.

## CHAPTER IX

### LANDIS—FATHER AND SON

“WELL!” Landis senior made his presence known the moment the heavy mahogany front door closed behind Jock.

“Good morning, Father; you a night owl, too?” Jock surveyed his parent’s portly person calmly regardless of the fact that it was two A. M., and that he was morally sure the governor had been waiting up for him at least two hours. He had been well bored that last two hours himself.

The Honorable Bracy had removed his reading glasses the better to scrutinize his son and was tapping his left palm with them, irritably, but discreetly, lest they should break. His bill for new lenses was frequently heavy owing to this inconvenient habit.

“Well!” he demanded again, ignoring Jock’s greeting.

“Quite so, thank you, Father,” his son replied with characteristic impudence. The sooner he had the storm over with and got to sleep, the better day he should have on the morrow. Jock possessed a coolness and daring that bid fair to be utterly wasted in his position as a millionaire’s son.

“Where have you been?”

“Slater’s.”

“Humph—suppose you dropped a good share of that money I gave you this afternoon. I was a fool to trust you with it.”

“You are not quite as discerning as usual, Father.”

“You mean you won this time?”

“No such luck! I mean I didn’t drop merely a good share of the roll—I left the whole six hundred as a souvenir.”

“You young whelp!”

"As you please, Father. Can you fit me out again or shall I have to wait and take the evening train? I shouldn't mind a little more sleep, but I'm expected to-morrow." Jock's manner was bored.

His father took a certain paternal pride in his impudence, but lately he had been nagged by so many irritating demands for cash that he was exasperated by each new demand. Further, he had waited up two endless hours for this young scape-grace with no better companion than a novel. He loathed novels, preferring to live a perpetual composite of the roles of hero and villain, himself. Novels reeked with sentiment, with moralizing, with psychological analysis of perfectly simple emotions. Emotions needed only to be classified—this accomplished, you embraced the agreeable ones and dodged the disagreeable. This theory of life left nothing to write about. Yet time often hung heavy on his hands and he could not always kill it by playing Canfield.

Jock having divested himself of his cap and overcoat in a leisurely manner, proceeded past his father in the direction of the grate fire at the farther end of the library. The library was a luxurious apartment which the Honorable Bracy cared very little for. It had been a concession to the architect and the decorator. A gentleman's residence was supposed to have a library therefore the Landis mansion had a library, which its owner seldom frequented during his wife's lifetime. Since her death he found it a shade less cheerless than the living rooms. It was a more admirable apartment than he knew. Jock appreciated its pedigreed furniture, hand-tooled editions, its rich-toned Persians and the half dozen notable American and French paintings above the book-cases, with a steadily growing comprehension of their value.

Like his father he was sensuous. Unlike his father, he was not vulgarly sensuous. The beautiful appealed to him not as an orgy but rather as a cult. Jock's sensitiveness to line and color and the appeal of harmony, came near being the only religion he had. The boy had done little actual thinking. His education had been an aggregation of impressions. He studied as little and as automatically as

possible, yet he had stored away the beginnings of profound convictions of which he was serenely unconscious. He had loved his mother conventionally; he despised his father from the bottom of his heart. He did not know exactly how rotten the Honorable Bracy was but the stench from his past had reached the boy's nostrils often enough already to make him wish to avoid knowing more.

It was borne in upon him as he stood warming himself by the fire that his father was angrier than usual. He did not much mind. He had never been convinced that his father cared for him personally. He was the heir to the name and property, and as such, he believed his father would put up with him no matter what he did.

He was not far wrong, but tonight his father's choler was rising because Jock was the last straw of a tormenting heap. His impudence taken alone would have been amusing. Following the insolence of his employees which intimated plainly that he only owned the mills on tolerance—one gang had that morning demanded the third raise within the year—and the still more annoying impertinence of the backers of the Erb Act, filial disrespect was too much. He should at least be able to club his own child into submission.

He regarded the Erb Act as insultingly personal and threateningly general. Publicly, he pooh-hoohed the possibility of any sane body of men limiting personal liberty in any such high-handed fashion, or that such a law could be enforced, if passed. Privately, he was panic-stricken.

The triumph of that other outrage on personal liberty, prohibition, was too recent to be ignored. Prohibition had been sporadic and badly enforced for a generation, then had swept the country almost in a night. And it *was* enforced now—in the main, magnificently enforced. What if this morality wave should gather momentum as had prohibition? It was unthinkable, and being unthinkable, left a residuum of dread in his mind.

In spite of his wealth he seemed to be whirled helplessly along by a world tide he dimly comprehended. His life-long traditions of the power of capital were fast being discredited. Capital seemed no longer the master; it was

rapidly becoming the servant. It no longer had perquisites beyond the masses; it had merely increasingly onerous obligations. And Mr. Landis lacked the physical vigor to confront menacing circumstances. He no longer boasted either his former power or his one time invigorating joy in a contest. He no longer had the same zest in his pleasures. There had come a subtle numbing of his nerves—of his senses. His physician had taken the trouble to warn him—knowing it was no use. Its only effect had been to create in him a fear he hotly denied even to his own consciousness. The man had literally slain his own soul, not by the one unpardonable sin of the scriptures but by a deliberate and long-continued process of sniping all his better impulses. His flesh was no longer animated by spirit; it was already carrion. These things were kindling in him a sullen rage. Gazing at Jock standing there vigorous and debonair, secure in his youth while his own powers were failing bred in him a malicious desire to strike.

"You seem to think it's a hell of a fine joke to gamble away six hundred dollars in one evening, perhaps if you have to wait a while for more, you won't find it so funny."

"As you please, Father," Jock retorted, "I'm in no special hurry to get back to college—Capitol City's good enough for me."

"Yes, good enough for you while you have unlimited money to fling to the dogs and—" he stopped short and scrutinized his son. "Strikes me this affection for Capitol City developed all of a sudden. 'Tisn't six months since you hated it for a God forsaken hole! What's the attraction?"

Jock did not bat an eyelash. He lighted a cigarette and returned his father's steady gaze indifferently.

Landis senior waited ostentatiously for a reply. Jock as ostentatiously refrained from making one.

"Nothing to say, eh? What about this story of an ermine cape, I've been hearing?"

Jock's color heightened a little. He didn't care what his father knew about him but he resented having Minette dragged in. The mere thought of his father's bleary eyes resting on her, incensed him. He was devoutly hoping that

the parental informant hadn't told him the girl's name.

Landis senior did not long permit him this comforting delusion. He inserted two fingers in his vest pocket and extracted a small memorandum book. After he had fumbled several pages he found what he wanted.

"Hm-m-n-Doty—Minette Doty. She must be a charmer to wheedle two thousand dollars' worth of ermine out of you at one fell swoop. By the way will you be so good as to inform me where you obtained that two thousand?"

He had Jock on the rack at last. Not knowing precisely how to meet this unexpected attack, he regarded his father in hostile silence.

The older man was realizing that he had struck a rich lead.

"Oh, ho! Maybe that was some of the other money you've been dropping at Slater's this winter. And that bill of four hundred for repairs for your plane—um-m, I begin to see a great light. You're not so much a gambler as a lover, eh?"

Jock was still silent, a grave mistake, as it gave his father the more opportunity to think.

"Maybe you didn't drop all that roll at Slater's to-night. It might pay me to have a little interview with the charmer. She sure comes high. Why Adele herself—" Landis senior shut his betraying lips suddenly.

Jock was white with wrath at the profanation of classing Minette with the abandoned and mercenary demi-mondaine he knew Mademoiselle Adele to be. Minette by contrast became suddenly pure, piteous, sacredly his own—something to be protected against the brutal license of his father's thoughts. What Minette could never have done for herself, Landis senior came near achieving for her. A wild impulse seized Jock to marry Minette. It was not wholly a chivalrous impulse; it was flavored with the spicy idea of enraging his father.

Unfortunately, the very audacity of his munificence and his facile lying was beginning to mollify his father. The boy evidently had nerve, and the imagination he himself lacked. He considered Jock's intrigue and his extravagance and his mendacity alike as venial failings to be ex-

pected in a rich man's son. Of what advantage, wealth, if it could not purchase pleasures and an immunity not enjoyed by the common herd? He began to relish the idea.

The more he thought about the absurdity of his twenty year old son clothing a little factory girl in ermine and then hood-winking him into believing that he had gambled away the money, the more it tickled his jaded palate. God, it was rich! He saw himself rehearsing the tale to a select circle at his club. His flabby jowls began to work. He snickered, he chortled, and finally gave his features up to chaos in a wild abandon of mirth. By the time he had regained his gravity, Jock had disappeared.

When Landis senior entirely recovered from the good joke, he went to his wall safe and extracted more bills which he put into an envelope with an admonition to his son to leave on the early train, and to stop buying ermine for factory girls. He tucked this under Jock's locked door and went contentedly off to bed to sleep the sound sleep popularly supposed to be a special privilege of the just.

Jock's prodigal impulse to buy the ermine cape had no flavor of absurdity for the boy himself. His attention had been caught by the dainty garment in a window display of furs, and his fancy had immediately wrapped its white softness about Minette. He gave no thought to incongruity as an older man might have done. He cared nothing for its suitability to her position or the occasions upon which she might wear it. It was an exquisite sheath for her loveliness that was sufficient. She was not of his world; he did not think of her as bound by its conventions.

The Honorable Bracy rose some hours after his son's departure the following morning suffering from a headache in spite of his good sleep. The fine joke did not seem so amusing as it had the preceding night. Still he had succeeded in packing the boy off to his studies once more. During breakfast he almost resolved to hunt up Minette and have a look at the girl. But by the time he had finished his muffins his habitual indolence had mastered him. He had enough for one day to put through certain defensive measures against the Erb Act.

He ordered the limousine and rolled down to the edi-

torial office of the *Capitol Star*. Barnard was in. Landis' indignation over the proposed invasion of popular liberty was as deleted piffle compared with his. He delivered himself off hand of eloquent diatribes in blankety blank English against this knavish attempt to filch women from the traditional trio of man's legitimate pleasures. As if Women and Song were not already sadly tame divorced from Wine.

But the Honorable Bracy had not come merely to listen to a presentation of his own point of view however forceful. He meant business. The pair laid their heads together and planned astutely. Mr. Landis was not devoid of acumen when his own interests were at stake, though he commonly preferred to let his subordinates harass their brains over his difficulties.

A number of tentative moves were arranged. The first was a sub rosa effort to persuade Cartright and some of the smaller stockholders of *The Republican* to sell all or part of their holdings. Failing this, to influence them to stop Derrick Martin's advocacy of the objectionable measure. A second was a recherche dinner to be given at the Club by Mr. Landis for a carefully selected company of the country members of the legislature, who might reasonably be expected to feel honored by the notice of so notable a capitalist as Mr. Bracy Landis. There were to be special attractions at this dinner such as phenomenally heady mineral water and a contingent from the chorus of a musical comedy. These were to be selected by the discriminating editor of *The Star* for their physical pulchritude.

"Of course," said Barnard, "care must be exercised not to include the wrong men. We might do more harm than good if we netted some strait-laced Presbyterian or Methodist. I will get some pointers from our man who covers the State-House, as to who the real birds and the would be birds are."

The editor smiled with a benign tolerance of human follies—especially in elderly persons of his own sex. Certain extremely innocuous flirtations on the part of his young wife had received neither tolerance nor forgiveness.

In addition to these schemes, a third plan was discussed

in a still lower tone of voice. They had not been shouting before. Editorial sanctums being known to have abominably good acoustic properties. The third plan was to be a last resort and was not reduced to an actual formula for action. Mr. Landis departed feeling that he had upholstered his declining years against the desolating blows of Erb Act anarchists.

On the second morning after his interview with his father, Jock Landis deposited his trunk at his fraternity house, and after greeting the boys at luncheon and catching up on all the latest gossip, arrayed himself in the immaculate flannels which a California January permitted, if it did not encourage, and motored over with Gordon to Burlingame.

The next morning Winifred Gordon pressed him into service to go in to the city with her. She was driving her father to the ferry to take an eastern train. They were on their way up-town when Minette caught sight of them. Jock was very mildly interested in Winifred, a fact of which she was perfectly aware. She fully intended that his interest should grow.

As a matter of fact Jock was secretly uneasy about Minette, though he knew the worst his father could do would be to have her dismissed from the factory. He doubted if he would venture that in the teeth of Veda's friendship for her, or that Hardwick would consent to such a dismissal. He had already discovered that his father did not dare to take down the Erb Act posters, greatly as they offended him. So Jock contented himself with writing a brief letter to Minette telling her "that his father had got wise to their friendship, but that if the old man bothered her in the slightest, to telegraph immediately to him." This done, he very nearly forgot Minette during the three days of the house party, and for several days afterwards while he was patching up his standing with the university authorities.

He was a little surprised not to find a letter awaiting him at the frat house when he came back from Burlingame. At the end of the week, he wrote her another brief letter

chiding her playfully for neglecting him. He wondered if she could have taken cold that night at the park and been ill.

When another week sped by and no letter appeared, he was irritated and vexed by turns. He wrote peremptorily telling her he was anxious and commanding her to telegraph him at once. No telegram came, and no letter, though five more days slipped past. Then he telegraphed to her. No answer. He waited three days longer and wired to Veda, inquiring if Minette were ill.

His imagination began to play him all sorts of tricks. She was dangerously ill—his father had persuaded her to give him up after the approved manner of sensational fiction and the movies—bitterest of all his fancyings, she had deliberately thrown him over for the unknown donor of the purple orchids.

Hardwick had succeeded no farther in tracing Minette than in ascertaining the fact that she had left the train at the Oakland Mole and taken the ferry for San Francisco. So much Mr. Jenkins of the ruddy countenance was able to tell him. Under Hardwick's directions he had been watching crowds and visiting mills and rooming houses, but no clue to her whereabouts had been uncovered. Jenkins had even made a trip to Jock's campus and fraternity house and had watched his comings and goings for some days at Hardwick's suggestion. This also had been so much fruitless effort.

Hardwick had firmly believed that Jock was keeping her somewhere. Veda's loyalty had made her deny this, but she had done it tonelessly till Jock's first letter arrived, then she took heart reporting its arrival as conclusive evidence that Minette was not with Jock. Dr. Bob had also thought Jock could supply all needed details as to the girl's disappearance. Both were puzzled by the first letter but finally agreed that it was a ruse.

The second and third found them still clinging to this idea.

"Precious clever of the young scoundrel—but not quite clever enough! Besides, if he wrote at all he would write oftener than once a week," Hardwick assured Veda.

He was out of town when Jock's wire to Veda came. She notified Dr. Bob and he owned that perhaps they were on the wrong scent. He liked the look of things less than ever, but he did not worry Veda with his forebodings.

Hardwick returned the following evening. Veda telephoned to his office immediately. He requested her to bring both telegrams and letters over.

He read Jock's telegram to Veda again and again, knitting his brows and pondering with the aid of the supple paper-cutter which he bent back and forth perilously close to the snapping point.

"It sounds honest—and worried—" he admitted presently. He read the other message again. "Veda, do you think it would be wicked to invade those letters? To help Minette, you must first find her."

They read the first letter. It was casually lover-like with the hint about Landis senior. The second had lost the casual tone, and sounded irritated, the third was undeniably anxious.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" ejaculated Garth, relieving his anxiety once more with the obliging paper-cutter. "If Minette hasn't gone with Jock where has she gone?—and why?"

Veda was studying the far corners of the room. Hardwick saw once more the madonna look he loved.

She realized by the impatient way Hardwick tossed the letters on the desk that he had no theory ready. Her mind was reverting to her last conversation with Minette that morning when she came to waken her. Was it a child? Did Jock know? What did Minette mean to do?

All her pretty bird-like ways were recalled and accused her, Veda Brussilov. She reproached herself for the congealed confidence of that October night. Minette had started to open her heart and she had lost her one golden opportunity through her own selfish abstraction.

After some moments of silence, Hardwick remarked grimly: "I think the next thing to do is to answer Mr. Jock Landis' telegram giving the cold facts. They should furnish him food for reflection."

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Veda wrote that day—not hiding her anxiety for her friend.

The third day brought Jock himself to Dormitory No. 2. His agitated air satisfied Veda's sense of justice. He tried to draw her out concerning the "other man." She thought this a mere subterfuge to shield himself, and dealt with him as she deemed he deserved. He finally came out with the tale of the purple orchids. Veda thawed a little as soon as she realized that he was not inventing the story.

"Purple orchids—nonsense—there had been no purple orchids." She went to the door and called in the day porter to verify her assertion.

"John, do you remember any one sending flowers to Minette just before she left?" Jock had always brought his own she chanced to remember.

The porter shook his head and looked at Jock.

"Has any one ever inquired at the door for her this winter except Mr. Landis here?"

"Not a soul!" The porter looked from one to the other, plainly disturbed.

She went to the telephone and called up the night porter and put the same questions with the same result.

"You see—it was just a little tale of Minette's. She never went out with any one but you. She held herself above all the men here at the plant—even the engineers. Her family were not working people. I persuaded her to come here thinking it was safer for a young girl than to be a sort of hanger on of stage people. She had done children's parts a lot—she was only fifteen when I came across her. Now—I am afraid—I did wrong." Veda broke down.

Jock was touched—astonished. It had never occurred to him that the orphan factory girl counted to any one but himself, save as her unprotected beauty tempted other men.

The moment Hardwick heard Jock was in town, he went straight to him and gave him a dressing down in which he did not hesitate to call a spade a spade. He had meant to thrash him if it cost him his superintendency of the mills, for he had a definitely worked out theory of Minette's disappearance by this time, and it made his gorge rise.

He found Jock at his own home. Veda had telephoned him of the boy's hallucination about another man. He waited with itching fists for the debonairly impudent Jock he expected to see. When the boy came into the room he was shocked out of part of his indignation. The boy looked ill.

He listened to Garth's denunciations stonily. Hardwick told him plainly that he believed she had gone to San Francisco in despair—to drown herself, or go to the devil, or dispose of a child. "You can judge which better than I," he ended stinginglly.

Jock started at the suggestion of the child.

"The fool evidently hadn't thought of that contingency" then with a glimmer of understanding, "he hasn't thought of anything but the purple orchids yarn."

When Jock finally opened his lips he ignored Hardwick's arraignment of himself. He seemed dazed.

"You say you tried to trace her?" He made Garth go over Jenkins' report twice. He was evidently trying to fasten every trifling detail in his memory. He asked if Jenkins were still in San Francisco and demanded his address. Then he said coolly: "Good night; I don't flatter myself that you have any further use for me."

When Garth found himself on the nearest street corner waiting for an uptown car, a few moments later, he was eagerly trying to classify Jock. He found himself at the same task after a hard evening's work at the office. "By Jove," he said as he rolled into bed, "he may be a villain, but he comes pretty near being a man. What in thunder does the boy mean to do?"

## CHAPTER X

### THE WOMAN'S FREEDOM OF CHOICE

**F**EBRUARY was a harassing month for the leaders in the Erb Act campaign. Margaret DeWitt had been threading her way through ethical labyrinths that would have entangled a D. D. or a doctor of philosophy. This was not the first time in her experience that she had found abstract right and the duties of a wife in conflict, but she had seldom groped as she was groping now. Ever since her husband had so naïvely shifted the responsibility of their daughter's apparent caprice upon her shoulders, woman-like she had been worrying over the charge.

She could not believe that the Erb Act or any dwelling on the distressing moral conditions it sought to remedy, had influenced Helen. Helen in common with her mates had been painstakingly informed of the evil side of life in college. Before that, bit by bit, throughout her girlhood, Margaret had instructed her, trying to keep things in their true relation, trying to have her understand humanity's pitiful weaknesses without shock or rubbing off the bloom of a young girl's faith in the essential goodness of her kind—trying above all to inculcate in her an unassailable purity that should not degenerate into prudery. She had believed she had succeeded. Now she was facing some unaccountable and mysterious crisis of feeling in the child, which if she understood it at all, implied the very morbid thinking against which she had hoped to render her immune. Margaret's sense of failure was very deep for weeks following that after-breakfast conversation with her husband.

Was he correct? Had too much dwelling on the seamy side of life even with the hope of uplifting, poisoned the young girl's imagination? She reviewed her own youth

first, for a clue—then all her years of loving confidences with Helen. The girl was wont to come to her frankly with all her perplexities.

It was not like her to brood or to withhold her confidence. Dr. Bob had said, Nellen was fearlessly honest. Margaret could find nothing in her own past or in her previous observation of her daughter to furnish a key to her present unfortunate state of mind. Next she studied Derrick, carefully, for days, making excuses to have long conversations with him, observing his manner with Helen, and she acquitted him of blame. Unless all her knowledge of men was at fault, Derrick Martin was chivalrous and a gentleman in the finest sense of the word. She found no trace of morbidity or coarseness in his habits of thought. That he loved Helen devotedly she was assured.

Had Helen been mistaken as to the nature of her love for Derrick? She studied this possibility and dismissed it as untenable. She had too obviously gloried in his love and his caresses for many months. It was possible her love had waned or that Derrick had consciously or unconsciously offended her. But why should Helen deny her her confidence if such were the case? She had cheerfully and promptly reported various small tiffs to her mother in the beginning of their engagement.

Margaret invited her daughter's confidence—lay in wait for it—tried to trap it, and despised herself for the subterfuge. But Helen's lips were sealed though she seemed to cling to her mother in a wordless appeal for understanding and sympathy. And Margaret's heart was wrung. She began to believe that her husband was right. To admit this was to give up some of her most cherished convictions. It would mean that the Victorian tradition of ignorance for the girl was justified—that an inexperienced imagination was liable to morbid distortions in its effort to realize nature's workings. If Helen, athletic, frank, actively interested in society, in affairs, full of the joy of youth and of love, could fall victim to unwholesome illusions, then some of the time-stained trash about woman's delicately poised nervous system and dire need of protection from all the poignant facts of life, must be accepted, not as a by-

product of false education as she had believed, but as an inescapable actuality.

To acknowledge this was to strike deep at her painfully wrought out philosophy of life. She would not admit it, but she resolved to act as if she did admit it. Any attempt to detach the girl from the Erb Act campaign by command or direct suggestion, would be merely to concentrate her thoughts more closely upon it. She persuaded her to accept an invitation of long standing to visit a college friend in the East.

"But, Mother," Helen protested, "you need me with this campaign on, and I want to be in at the death. I wouldn't miss having my part in it for anything. Why, it's going to be one of the biggest things in history—I want to be able to boast to my sons and daughters that I had a tiny part in a world reform."

"I know you do, dear, and you can, for you have worked as patiently as any of us this fall. But you're getting thin—I can't put my heart in this if I have to worry about you, not to mention Derrick, who I know feels disturbed about you." Margaret forced her lips into a smile as she mentioned Derrick. There was no answering light in Helen's face.

It was bed time and Margaret was sitting on the bed watching her daughter brush out the coppery locks that fell far below her waist. She yearned over the girl's beauty! She had so longed to be beautiful in her own youth. Suppose in spite of this rich dower, their child missed the finest happiness of life through her, the mother, who would gladly have given her own body to be burned to spare her sorrow! It was agonizingly unthinkable. If she had made a mistake she must undo it. Her eyes mechanically searched the familiar belongings of the dainty room for some possible clue.

Helen's friends declared her room was Nellenish. It was even more a temple Margaret had builded for her. Her own meager girlhood made her burn all the incense possible to Helen's youth. The soft grays and blues, the purity of line of the simple old mahogany, were Margaret's choice. Helen's was the froth of silk and lace and

silver that cluttered the room into romantic livableness for dreaming girlhood. Margaret loved every inch of that cubic space, even its not infrequent disorder. She wanted to inject beauty into the inner life of her daughter through every pore of habit. Life demanded beauty of the woman, physical—spiritual, and life drained it from her so wastefully. She wanted to endow Helen with reserves that should suffice through a lifetime. And a kindred impulse had fired her to the defense of all girlhood—of all the long-ing palpitating young creatures whose cup of life was so often spilled wantonly by lust. "God never meant this thing to be! Nature never meant it to be! All manhood worth the name, deplored while it desecrated. Prostitution was not inevitable, even if all history had not one clean page. Human aspiration had conquered brute instinct in countless directions. Human kindness could conquer here. Margaret firmly believed this. So she worked, and pitied and worked yet again. To-night she was studying Helen with wistful eyes, wondering if Heaven could be so unjust as to punish her for permitting the girl a share in her compassionate effort to protect those less favored than herself.

Helen was pondering also and her brush parted the shining strands of hair laggingly. If she could get clear away and think, she might see things more clearly, she felt. If not, the end must come soon between herself and Derrick. She was continually wounding him when she meant to be kind. Her feeling of repulsion had been intensified by Mayern's kiss. Accompanying this, was a growing resentment against her own father that frightened her. Yes, it would be best to go away. Surely, if this were all a night mare, as she tried to persuade herself, a complete change would dispel it. But did her mother guess how wrong things were with her, that she proposed this expensive trip just when she was most needed at home? She could not determine but "Mother" had often seemed to have a sixth sense when life began to close in upon her oppressively.

She turned to look at her. Margaret's figure was drooped and the gray was beginning to show more plainly

on her temples. But the strained lines of her face relaxed into sweetness as her eyes met Helen's.

"You will go, Nellen dear?"

The girl flung herself upon her mother's neck in a passion of tenderness. "Mother, Mother, how do you do it? Do your heart strings pull when I get restless? Oh, Mums, I'll go so thankfully you can't know! And I'll come back so gay you won't recognize me, and I'll buck in and help you like fun to make up. I'll write to Marge to-night." With a parting hug she sprang up and ran to her desk to rummage for paper. And Margaret went down to explain to John Camberwell how she had detached Helen from the objectionable reform, and to plan with him for the needed funds for the trip.

He regarded this as a complete vindication of his superior wisdom. He wished to be magnanimous in condoning her offense against his judgment, but he could not resist reminding her that this extra expense would have been entirely unnecessary but for her folly. They would be spending for this jaunt money that should have gone for Helen's trousseau.

And Margaret was so fearful lest she had been rash, that she scarcely resented the subtle disrespect of his gently patronizing tones. She knew he was entirely sincere in his views and meant no offense. It was his way. It was essential to his own self respect to feel himself superior to his wife. Man had been divinely ordained to be the head of the household, and he had been made mentally and physically the stronger for the express purpose of dominating. It was the old fiction of the divine rights of kings transferred to the home. To balance this autocratic power, woman had been endowed with potent physical charms and a finer moral sense than the man. John Camberwell De-Witt no more doubted this than he doubted that the earth revolved round the sun.

Margaret had long since ceased to argue this point. Indeed, you cannot successfully argue with conviction solidified in the mould of a lifetime of habit. Rather she employed a finesse that degenerated into secretiveness, and something nearly resembling deceit, in extreme cases. Her

native honesty forced her to acknowledge this to herself in humiliating self abasement. She realized this was true in the present instance. She had not conceded that he was right. She merely feared he might be right. She was not detaching Helen from the movement out of affection or regard for her husband, but entirely for the girl's interest. She had not found a way out of her ethical maze, she had merely seated herself in a cleared space to think. The thorn hedge still lay all about her.

The campaign for the Erb Act was becoming intensive. The opposition to the Act was waxing more aggressive and insolent, combining a large number of the wealthier and more reckless of the pleasure-loving men of the state—"Our most responsible citizens" so *The Capitol Star* asserted—and the entire forces of organized vice in the inter-mountain region. The under-world knew that such an entering wedge spelled the beginning of a wave of public opinion that would change their status from a tacitly acknowledged necessity of civilized life, to a sporadic and hunted outlawry. They would no longer be merely spectacularly shameful, they would be criminal and subject to the penalties of law. And they fought tooth and nail in desperation.

Never before in the history of Capitol City had there been so much illicit gaiety. Never before had the demi-monde flaunted themselves in such magnificence or such numbers. The legislative halls were stifling with their perfumes. This session promised to become the scandal of the future. The wives of some of the country members heard the rumors and came up to town. One man declared the Capitol was no longer respectable.

The Honorable Bracy Landis and his henchman of the *Capitol Star* gave their dinner. It was a notable success as an orgy and turned one vote against the bill the reformers might otherwise have won. But most of the carefully selected guests were so carefully selected that they were all unqualifiedly against the measure anyway. The Landis conspiracy against Derrick and *The Republican* was hanging fire. Cartright had proved stubborn. He

didn't care a rap for the bill. Left to himself he might have called Derrick upon the carpet for his intemperate advocacy of it. But he hated Bracy Landis and intensely disliked the idea of being manipulated. He could neither be bought out nor bulldozed. The opposition had succeeded in gaining control of a number of scattered shares for which Derrick had always held proxies, but so far their net gain had been only to make Derrick uneasy lest they should cut the ground from under him. He might have been still more uneasy had he known his enemies were hatching an unholy conspiracy to attack him from the rear.

"If we could get hold of DeWitt, we might pull Martin's house about his ears so he'd be glad to shut up."

The Honorable Bracy grunted. "Pooh, DeWitt can't muzzle his own wife, let alone handle a man like Martin. If he could shut up his wife, it'd be a big gain. She's got every fool woman and female club in town working and passing resolutions. Why, those ridiculous women are actually intimidating the men. The member from Rand County—I can't think of his name, said he could never be re-elected, if he got the women down on him. Women—he! He! This is what comes of giving them suffrage!"

"The darlings are a pest all right, Landis, but DeWitt could muzzle Martin—I'll lay you five to one—because Derrick's got as deadly a case on the daughter as I've seen in many a day."

"The more fool he! The girl's got hair and figure but there's plenty just as good down on the row—and they come cheaper." The Honorable Bracy was in a bad humor. He did not believe the Bill would pass—nobody believed it would, but it was going to come perilously close to it. "Another session might turn the trick if it were not completely squelched this year. Possibly there might be something in getting hold of DeWitt." There wasn't much friendship lost between them but he knew the man had a most deep-seated reverence for authority. He was a conservative who worshipped the powers that be, merely because of their being, regardless of their fitness for being.

Bracy Landis was the power in Capitol City financially. He had it in his hands to do the stock-broker many a good or ill turn. Why not turn the screws?

The more he considered the idea, the more he was pleased with it. He did not take the editor into his confidence this time but he left the editorial sanctum and went straight to DeWitt's office.

John Camberwell was pleasantly flattered by the financier's cordial manner. He was not only flattered but deeply gratified when after some generalities and parleying, Mr. Landis asked him to buy two thousand shares of a certain wobbling stock for him. John Camberwell happened to have loaded up rather heavily with this and had been very uneasy for some weeks past as to how to unload without serious loss—a loss he could ill afford. Mr. Landis's instructions would just let him out without actual loss on what he sold. As a matter of interest, Mr. Landis was perfectly well aware of the fact that DeWitt had too much of the stock to feel easy, and knew to a nicety just what figure would cover. He did not mean to make DeWitt any bigger present than was necessary to put him in an obliging frame of mind.

Having attended to the little details of the stock deal, Mr. Landis casually opened the subject of the Erb Act. He assumed the lofty interest of a public-spirited citizen.

"It's too bad," he said regretfully, "that people are so blind. One can't really blame the women and preachers for starting out on this unfortunate crusade. Naturally, with their inexperience and lack of knowledge of the world, they feel that it would be a noble thing to do away with organized vice. So do we all. My own reputation is not of the best—a man may be pardoned some little indulgences, but I would cheerfully support this measure if it were practicable. But any man of the world knows the thing is the veriest pipe dream—never was possible, never will be. Some reformer would have put it over long ago if it had been. The practical results would be to let vice loose to attack our homes. You with a beautiful daughter realize this danger more even than I can. Why, already, right here in our city, we are having the most terrible

epidemic of vice we have ever known merely because of this unwholesome agitation." Mr. Landis' choler was rising, stimulated by his own plea. "The poor fools can't see that the only sane way to treat the social evil is to let it alone." He realized suddenly that this might sound a little strong to a man whose wife and prospective son-in-law were prominent figures in this agitation. He apologized gracefully, concluding; "Not that I don't admire the magnificent disinterestedness of the movement. But there is such a thing as making noble but utterly useless sacrifices of time, and money, and reputation."

Mr. DeWitt had been thinking along these very lines. He was immensely gratified to have the judgment of so influential a personage as Mr. Landis confirm his own so exactly. He had shrunk from Margaret's participation in this malodorous campaign with squeamish distaste. He felt that he had scored a signal victory in detaching Helen from it and he had disliked to push his wife farther. There was something in Margaret's direct gaze and acquiescent silence that vaguely disquieted him. She had been a dutiful wife in the main, but he had always felt compelled to use his rightful authority with more moderation than even the dictates of good taste and his affection suggested. There always seemed to be lurking in Margaret potential possibilities of rebellion. He never went so far as to concede that he knew himself powerless to control her, but he avoided direct issues as much as possible.

John Camberwell was also not unaware of the business possibilities which Mr. Landis could open for him. This small commission suggested roseate future possibilities upon which his native conservatism did not permit him to dwell long. He did feel free to enjoy the compliment of this commission to the full even if he never received another. Mr. Bracy Landis could not have bribed him with any promise of future patronage however alluring; his honor would have shed such a temptation before he had time to consider it. But his gratified egoism could make him as compliant to Mr. Landis' wish, as a bribe would have a dishonorable man. Such unconscious weaknesses have given rise to the aphorism that every man has his price. This

was not true in any sense of Mr. DeWitt. You could not have bribed his vanity. To be president of these United States would not have tempted him. But you could deceive his vanity. And Mr. Landis aided by John Camberwell's own inclination had so deceived him.

He resolved to insist upon Margaret's withdrawing from further participation in the campaign. He resolved also to influence Derrick to lessen his activities a little. He knew he could not persuade him to give up his advocacy of the measure now that he was so thoroughly committed to it. To do so would lay Martin open to the imputation of a dishonorable selling out. John Camberwell fully realized this. But Martin need not be so fervent in his championing. It did not occur to him that for Margaret to desert the standard she had been so largely instrumental in raising, would also be traitorous. He did not think of Margaret in relation to a cause or to the community at all. He did not place her in any other perspective than her setting as his wife, and the mother of his children. He assumed that the mere fact of her husband's unwillingness to have her continue her efforts along a given line, should be conclusive to any rational person.

Mr. DeWitt went home to lunch with his mind fully made up. Margaret was not there. His luncheon table was neatly set and a dainty meal was promptly served but his wife's absence made him feel aggrieved. He did not object to her frequent absences at fashionable luncheons or bridges. Society had legitimate claims upon any high bred woman's time, but he had always seriously objected to having committee meetings and benevolent activities break in upon the regularity of his habits. "Charity begins at home, my dear," he was wont to say sententiously. And Margaret said nothing and offended as little as possible. This time she had left word that she had been called to an important conference on the Erb Act.

John Camberwell waited for her until two o'clock. He returned to his office distinctly resolved that this should be her last participation in reform movements. He left the office at four o'clock and went home to strike while the iron was hot, and, incidentally, to dispose of the disagree-

able matter before dinner. Margaret had not yet returned.

She came in five minutes before dinner excited and blooming. "Oh, John, I've the greatest news for you!" Her fox furs and black velvet hat with its rose facing set off her fine matronly beauty to perfection. If she had not been a pretty girl she came near being a handsome woman.

Her husband was not insensible to her appearance now. "Really, Margaret held her looks astonishingly well."

"You could never guess—I can't believe it myself, it means so much to us. Governor Gregg has appointed me to fill out Alexander Smith's unexpired term on the Board of Corrections and Charities."

"What?" John Camberwell could not believe his ears.

"Yes, Smith died about three weeks ago. You remember we noticed it in the paper at the time and you said you hoped his successor wouldn't be quite as open to the suspicion of graft as Smith had been. I guess he was a grafter all right. Derrick says he was hand and glove with Senator Camp who is one of the men whose vote we are after for the Bill. Camp is president of the Land County cement works and Smith was working to have the new building at the reform school of cement instead of stone. See? And—"

"Margaret! It is highly unnecessary to go into all these disagreeable details, I—"

"Yes, but it is necessary because I want to explain why this means so much to our cause. Of course Camp knows he can't bribe me but he will be a little careful not to antagonize me, for with only five on the board my vote might be decisive. And it isn't just Camp. Derrick says that the board has a good deal of petty patronage that the country members like to have a hand in—and I'll be a rather important person—and have a lot more influence! John! John! Isn't it too wonderful?"

Her husband had been waiting with acid courtesy for her to finish. His face did not reflect her elation. Margaret became aware of this disappointing circumstance gradually.

"Why, John, you aren't going to be disagreeable, are you?"

John Camberwell tried to smile tolerantly. "Disagree-

able is hardly a fitting word under the circumstances. I am amazed beyond measure at the governor's assurance."

"Assurance? Why, John, it is a public benefaction—the greatest kind of a compliment to me individually and a big boost for the Bill. I didn't want to take it at first. I suggested Dr. Bob or some of our other men, but the governor said he should give the job to the opposition if I were not sufficiently in earnest to sacrifice my private interests for my cause. He said I was just the stuff he needed to straighten out the Corrections Board, and I need not think my civic duties ended with supporting the Erb Act. 'I know you have always kept out of politics, Mrs. DeWitt, that's why I appointed you. You women are always complaining that you are ignored in public administration, but like yourself the best women are loath to shoulder the responsibility when it is thrust upon them.' And he ended up by telling me that he considered he was giving the Erb Act a fighting chance by appointing me. He said he didn't know whether such a measure could ever be made effective or not, but he would like to see the thing tried out, though he did not feel justified in his position in coming out for it publicly. You needn't be afraid I'm going in for politics, John. I haven't the slightest inclination that way. But this is different. Derrick and two or three of our leaders say this is actually providential. And, John, do you know I think the eternal feminine had something to do with the Governor's giving me this appointment? You know I used to go with Tommy Gregg while I was in High School. We were on an oratorical contest together once and I beat him."

Margaret laughed at the recollection. She knew she was garrulous, but she was too happy and excited to care. "Derrick says he'll help me out and give me pointers about their little graft games, if you don't want to bother. Of course, a woman doesn't have the same chances to hear things as a man."

"Margaret!"

John Camberwell's state of mind was that of a prosecuting attorney who finds the defendant depraved beyond belief.

The radiance faded from her face. She waited, watching his face intently. Her fingers were mechanically pulling into shape the gloves she had just removed.

"Do you imagine for one moment that I should permit you to accept public office?"

"I have accepted it," she said simply.

"Your acceptance must be withdrawn."

"Why?"

"Why! Margaret, are you out of your senses? My wife, a DeWitt, consorting with politicians, courting notoriety in the papers, being associated entirely with men until late hours of the night! And you ask me why?"

"Members of finer families than the DeWitts have served on public boards, John. Some of our most illustrious statesmen and business men have been proud of such public trusts."

Margaret was deliberately insincere in this defense. She was merely parrying to give herself time to think. She had known her husband would deplore her taking a public office even as she herself deplored the necessity. But that he should work himself into a cold rage over it, had not occurred to her.

"Margaret, this is too serious a subject for trifling. We are not discussing men. It is often a man's highest duty regardless of family or personal tastes to fulfill his obligations of citizenship."

"I am a citizen," retorted Margaret.

"Yes, you are a citizen by courtesy, but you are first of all a wife, and I appeal to your duty as a wife to respect your husband's judgment in a matter of such moment. It is not fitting for a delicately reared woman to mix up in the corruptions of politics or public office. I do not wish to wound your vanity, my dear, but I must speak plainly, you have neither the sound judgment nor mastery of affairs to fill such a position with credit. You have already permitted yourself to be flattered into over-rating your own ability, which I may venture to suggest does not augur well for your usefulness in such a position. But that is entirely beside the question. The mere fact that there is no other

woman on the board should be sufficient to convince you of the impropriety of your being there."

"There are six women members of the House. There are women among the university regents and on many of the state boards. Derrick did not consider it improper and he has had a training in the gentilities as rigorous as your own. Several high class Englishwomen have served in Parliament since they were granted suffrage—three of them titled, if I am not mistaken."

"My dear, it is useless to argue, I absolutely refuse my consent. Derrick is still more English than American. He does not object to woman's taking part in public affairs. I deem it the height of vulgarity. You would have to make frequent trips about the state. You would be often away over night—you would be thrown into the company of men who are not even gentlemen! It is impossible! The work itself would be arduous. You would have grave problems of business and administration to consider for which you are utterly unfitted, my dear. This is no Red Cross or War Work affair! But if you were perfectly able to undertake them, your place is in the home. I did not marry you to have your energies spent on other people's business. Your home is not run so perfectly that you could not give it more time and thought to advantage. But there is no need to argue further. We will consider the matter settled. I think Olga came to the door to announce dinner five minutes ago but she had the good taste to retire on witnessing our over earnest discussion."

"By all means let us go to dinner. But the matter is not settled, John, we will finish discussing it later." Margaret divested herself of her coat and furs and led the way to the dining room without waiting to remove her hat. This last trifle nicely indicated her temper. For John Camberwell regarded the modern fad of women dining, except in hotels or restaurants with their hats on, as a distinct breach of genuine breeding.

Dinner was a silent meal. There was no Helen chattering to fill in their conversational lapses. Margaret realized that she had come to a parting of the ways at last. The two paths open to her could not by any cross cuts be made

to lead in the same general direction. Her first survey of the question was trivial. What would John do if she defied him? What would people say? Was it wisest to yield to him? She did not fear separation or divorce. Both were anathema to John Camberwell's worship of the proprieties. She visualized accurately what would occur. Its like had happened more than once before in their married life. She could see the biting courtesy, so punctilious as to deceive child or servant or stranger, which he would accord her. He would not speak an unnecessary word to her before others. In private he would not address her at all. His every look and act would ignore her existence. She had marveled more than once at the cold perfection of his method. It always seemed unreal to her afterwards. She sometimes wondered if she exaggerated his virulence. When he thought he had punished her sufficiently it would end, and it was the end that made her despise her husband. At all other times she respected him and felt the affection and tolerant pity, which their mutual love for their children and the sorrows and difficulties of an average married life had engendered. So far, his aloofness had usually lasted days—sometimes, as much as two weeks, with an aftermath of disapproval and distrust that wore itself out in some vague indefinite way. "This time it might be months!" she reflected.

Yet this was not her chief concern. She had lived through it before—Margaret gave the unconscious shrug with which she often emphasized to herself the fact that her shoulders were broad. The idea looming big in her mind was that she cared so little what he thought or did. This complicated the ethical side of the question. She wanted to decide it on the highest plane. What was actually her highest duty—the wife's or the citizen's? It was easy to tell herself that the need of the hundreds of thousands of unfortunates she hoped to serve, was greater than the need of any one man for her loyalty. But was it easy because she did not love him—did not trust his judgment? If she had loved him utterly, self-sacrificingly as she was capable of loving, would it have seemed so easy to decide for humanity? If—it—had been—Dr. Bob? It was use-

less to say that he would never have required submission of her. If he had required it, would she tear out her very heart strings because this other duty was the greater?

Her mouth was parched. The morsels of food she struggled to worry down for appearance sake, choked her. The hand that raised her cup trembled. Her husband confronted her white and grim. He looked as if he had been carved out of gray stone. The muscles of his face seemed rigid with a rigidity that was not of the flesh but of the will. Margaret knew that he was suffering. She knew, with the pang the realization always brought, that he loved her with all the force of an inexpressive nature. He loved her most poignantly when he most disapproved of her. And her conscience reproached her that she had never been able to make return—that her own passionate love had repudiated him.

This being the case was it possible for her to decide the abstract right of the problem before her? For a time she felt herself dazed, helpless.

After dinner John Camberwell poured upon her a stream of mingled logic and sarcasm that did not help to clear her mind, though she did get his point of view and learned of his morning call from Mr. Landis. She was deaf to all his appeals to telephone the governor at once declining the appointment.

"I must have time to think it over calmly," was her utmost concession. He flung out of the room and presently left the house.

When he was gone, she went to the telephone and called up Derrick asking him not to put anything in type about her appointment until he heard from her again.

"What's up, Mater?" He liked to call her that. "Nothing wrong I hope."

"Mr. DeWitt objects, Derrick. I want to think it over a little before the papers commit me."

Derrick whistled. It would be suicidal for the cause if she backed out. His first impulse was to say this. But he instantly reflected that there are some things you can't do—even for a cause. One is, to advise your prospective mother-in-law to defy your future father-in-law. "It isn't

done, you know." Further, he sympathized with John Camberwell's point of view. He had been more than happy to have Helen out of it, but surely a middle-aged married woman was different. It was the deuce of a muddle, but he had to keep out.

Margaret gathered a fair impression of what he thought from what he did not say. It did not help her greatly. She was trying to think calmly but her head was throbbing.

A generation before she would have gone to her rector for spiritual counsel, and he would have advised her to follow the Oriental conception of woman's duty which Saint Paul incorporated into Christianity. Margaret had naturally a strong religious bent. She had had some rather intense emotional religious experiences in her youth. But these had never developed into any vital force in her life. Instead of strengthening her character they seemed rather to confuse her own moral perceptions and to emasculate her will power, leaving her a prey to any dominating personality with whom she came in contact.

In her youth some form of Christianity had predominated every city and hamlet in America. It had been a tower of strength in her parents' lives. In her maturity it seemed to have degenerated into a safety deposit box for inherited religious tradition. Yet the human spirit craved religion as the human stomach craved food. And her own generation was certainly no exception. It proved this by greedily devouring most of the new religions extant, Christian Science, New Thought, and the many-guised Spiritism so popular since the war. Why was not Christianity satisfying this hunger? Did Christian priests and ministers fail to appreciate the immortal vitality of their own faith? Had they been so stunned by the appalling wave of materialism advancing upon them that they were afraid, and hid their precious talent so deep in a maze of out-worn theology and tradition that religion lagged behind while science and all the arts of civilization went forward by leaps and bounds? Why did the church sit by and look on fearfully while mankind translated her own fundamental truths into human institutions? She had waited timor-

ously watching slavery banished from civilized countries a generation ago. She was contemplating dubiously now, the rapid emergence of women from tutelage.

Margaret had learned to distrust the consoling mysticism of religious observance because she found it reactionary and unnerving. She had need of all her moral force to do her woman's work in the stress of her times. She needed a clear unbiased brain to pick her ethical way through the multiplying sophistries twentieth century unrest was pouring in upon her. She could not afford to weaken her courage by listening to sentimentalities about woman's finding her highest joy in ministering to her family—in sacrificing her spirit on the altar of love, human or divine. Such teaching had made women pliant to polygamy—to self-immolation. Her family scarcely needed her ministrations longer save as a luxurious cushioning of life. But the world outside her home was groaning for succor as it never had groaned before. And her aspiration to help must have the divine origin that all spontaneous aspiration had. Would Divine Love require its own promptings to be offered up in a barren sacrifice? Her native common sense taught her better. No, when her day's work was done she might with a clear conscience give herself up to dreaming again the dream of her childhood—the dream of an obedient little girl so very very good that nothing bad could ever happen to her. But now she was still in the heat of the day, and she must do her part in defiance of all accepted traditions for good little girls—if need be—and take the consequences cheerfully for the sake of those weaker than herself. So it never occurred to Margaret to go to her rector. She intended to make her decision as a human being, not as a woman or as a communicant of St. Mary's, which was backing the Erb Act very half-heartedly if at all.

Margaret wrestled alone till nine o'clock. Every time she saw her public duty bigger than her private obligation, the thought of her own failure as a wife confronted her. At ten minutes past nine she went to the 'phone and called up Dr. Bob.

He would be home in a few minutes, the maid reported. Margaret left her number. When she heard his voice on the other end of the wire, she felt a thrill of relief.

"Can you come over right away, Bob?"

"Nobody sick, I hope."

"No, just the Erb Act—I need some advice."

"I'll be right along—heard the news down town. It's great! I didn't think Tommy Gregg had it in him to be so wise."

Olga was so slow Margaret answered the Doctor's ring herself a few moments later. The doctor guessed the situation the instant he saw her face. He had wondered how John Camberwell would take having his wife in the public eye to such an extent. Social prominence for her would have delighted him. The more space she occupied in the society columns, the more Mr. DeWitt would have been persuaded of his own good fortune in having married a woman of tact and finesse. Dr. Bob understood this perfectly. But to have Margaret given a man's job. He wondered if there wouldn't be a tinge of jealousy mingled with DeWitt's conventional disapproval of the situation. He always found it hard to be strictly just to Mr. John Camberwell DeWitt.

"Bob, I'm going to play you a mean trick, but I'm desperate. I've thought out both sides till my head is going round in circles. I can't decide and I must notify the Governor by ten o'clock if I recall my acceptance." Margaret appealed in advance, against his disapproval of her appealing to him, in a matter where her husband was concerned.

His face grew grave. "Fire away!" he said shortly.

"Bob, I've got to be frank—franker than we've ever dared be before, but I'm a middle-aged woman now—and youth is a long way behind. My brain and my conscience both urge me to take the Governor's appointment—it seems to me actually providential. I feel that I should be betraying you and Derrick and Veda and every backer of this movement as well as the young life we hope to save, if I shrank back because of any person's censure—or to save

myself from distress. John has made an issue of this. And yet—perhaps—oh, the thing that gets me, is; if I loved him as I should, would I see it this way?"

Dr. Bob regarded her somberly for some seconds without replying.

"May I smoke, Margaret?"

Margaret's humoring smile relaxed her tenseness a trifle as he meant it should. He fumbled vainly in his pockets for a match although he invariably had a roomy silver case full of them in his right hand trousers' pocket. Margaret fetched one from the mantel, struck it, and held out the flickering flame with another smile. Dr. Bob took it and lighted his cigar so deliberately he almost burned his fingers.

When he had taken a few calming puffs, he said soberly: "Margaret, if I should presume to advise you in this, the time would surely come when you would blame me, and John would have the right to resent any such interference on the part of his family physician. The only thing I can do to help is to suggest that you put the question to yourself in such a way as to cut out the emotional side and leave it to your sense of fairness. And I am going to ask you not to tell me what you decide. Suppose you reverse the situation. Your whole heart is in this movement, but John, I infer, does not approve of it per se. Suppose he should feel it his duty to make a fight on the measure, and that the governor should appoint him to this position, what would he conceive to be his duty in such a situation and what would you consider the right course for him? He loves you deeply—there could be no question but that he would suffer from an open rupture between you. I believe if you will think it out along that line, you will reach the abstract justice of the case."

Margaret's eyes were luminous with the new thought. They were fixed on him with the absorbed trust of a child. Her cheeks were flaming because of his nearness. Middle-aged blood sometimes forgets it is no longer young. And Robert Rutlege loved her with the aching loneliness of a man whose youth has slipped away, and for whom the future holds nothing except duty. And duty alone is a

monotonous house-mate. His face was as flushed as Margaret's. He was painfully aware of this. Consulting his watch ostentatiously, he rose to go precisely five minutes after he arrived.

"Sorry to hurry off, but I have to call on old Mrs. Bates before I turn in."

Margaret rose also and took the extended hand in both her own. "Thank you a thousand times—I can work it out now and feel satisfied. Oh, Bob, you are such a comfort!"

He smiled down on her with the tenderness she needed to warm her, folding his other hand over hers with a close pressure. "God bless you, dear, and make his face to shine upon you—and give you peace." Then he hurried away. He got into his run-about and headed it for the hills. Poor Mrs. Bates fretted away a full hour wondering why he did not appear, before he rang the door bell fatigued and cold. Dr. Bob's special personal devil had been getting in his work once more.

Margaret stood for minutes where he had left her. She listened to the front door close behind him. She listened for the hum of his motor as the machine started off. She felt calm, enveloped in a delicious warmth that seemed to detach her from all things vexatious. She put out the light in the living room and went slowly upstairs. Mechanically taking off her dress she slipped on a bath robe. Slowly she brushed out her hair before the dressing table mirror, but she was not for the moment aware that the dressing table had a mirror. She saw not her own reflected face but her husband's. She was trying to put the case with absolute fairness. His position? It would never occur to him to hesitate on account of her feelings, and yet she was as positive as Dr. Bob, that he loved her deeply. But John Camberwell's standards of action were something utterly apart from his love. He would not have deviated from what he believed his duty a hair's breadth to win her in his longing youth. And Margaret held this the finest quality in his character. She saw in a flash what the doctor had meant her to see, that there can be no real conflict between love and duty, because love that would lure love from its

ideals is at its worst, lust, at its best, mere pride of possession.

She would not influence John against his conscience no matter what the cost to herself. Even less would she presume to influence Dr. Bob! No, she was sure, she would not influence Dr. Bob against his conscience even if it meant—she could never see nor speak—to him again. If this were true of the man, it must be true of the woman. She had no more moral right to neglect the duties life thrust upon her for the sake of love, or to avoid pain for those she loved, or for herself, than had the man. She would deem the man a craven who would betray their cause for fear of his wife's displeasure.

Margaret dropped the brush and went to the telephone.

"That's all straightened out, Derrick, you can run your notice." Her voice was cheery.

"Good for you, Mater, I was sick over your giving it up. We can give the opposition a run for their money now. I have thought of a lot of little levers it will furnish us—legitimately, too. Count on me for anything and everything. I can relieve you of much of the clerical part for a time. It will be a hard pull for you to learn the ropes, but you can do it."

Margaret waited an hour for her husband, then went to bed and was sound asleep when he came in at a quarter past eleven.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DOCTOR'S CONSCIENCE

**D**R. BOB listened to the clock ticking out the long hours of the night in exasperated self disgust. His interview with Margaret had unnerved him. He was quite equal to throttling his own longings. He had learned to live comfortably with his own disappointment—to consider his meager personal life in a measure compensated by his greater opportunities for usefulness. But the hurt and longing in Margaret De Witt's eyes, her pathetic indecision and child-like appeal, tore down all his defenses. Why must this noble woman suffer to the very last day of her life because the immature girl had been herded into an unsuitable marriage? She had been dominated through every hour of her girlhood by her family. She must fight in order to draw an independent breath so long as John Camberwell lived. "The cad!" The doctor's conscience forced him to qualify. No, he was not precisely a cad; he was rather the victim of his own virtues and he was obeying only a natural impulse in striving to make her a martyr to them also.

"If it had been different! If they two could have walked together! If Helen—" his powerful frame relaxed its tension as he let his imaginations slip into a golden dream of what might have been—what might be still even—if—his muscles tautened again. The first glimmers of gray dawn were seeping into the room. Light came diurnally into most people's lives—why should she be deprived?

He continued to wrestle with his own special devil till the full morning light revealed all the banal bareness of his bachelor's bed room—the polished floor with its single black and gray navajo—the high iron hospital cot—the scarred old mahogany bureau that had been his mother's. The Puritan austerity of the room came to his rescue. His life was builded on austerity. His confidence in himself—

his influence in the community—his power as a physician were upheld by his rigid adherence to right. And Margaret? Her husband would always stare at her from her daughter's eyes. No, divorce could only be a physical thing—it could never loosen the bonds of thirty years' association.

Dr. Bob was the son of a mother who believed in the ten commandments and the possibility of subduing the flesh even for polygamous man. She had never indulged in any sentimental regrets over the temptations that assail young men. She pointed out to her son clearly the differences between a mongrel and a man, and gave him to understand that her stock had been wont to breed men.

As a youth, Dr. Bob had been big and raw-boned and given to athletics. His recipe for curbing the flesh had been to let the girls alone. He did so till he felt shy and awkward and generally uncomfortable with every woman under forty. He captained his college foot-ball team to many victories and was a power among his mates but he had experienced no emotion keener than disgust over rotten sport or indignation over some act of injustice till he began the practice of his profession.

Now at fifty-four he was a dynamo of energy cooled by a fountain of pity. Nature had cut him out to be the husband of an adoring wife and the father of ten children. Lacking these his arms felt empty, and he tried to adopt everybody he came in contact with, though his first parental act in many cases would have been to administer a sound thrashing for the culprit's good quite in the time-honored way. In spite of the wasted opportunities of his youth he had learned to know women exceedingly well, as only a physician in general practice can know them. Being big and brusque and boyishly sympathetic, Dr. Bob was immensely popular with his feminine patients. He passed through ambushes of coquetry, and other overtures beside which coquetry was a colorless fluid, unscathed. Possibly the deep and pure love he suffered for Margaret De Witt protected any vulnerable spot his mother had overlooked. Still the good lady's work had been pretty thorough.

So Dr. Bob worked and cured and sympathized and ranted, and not even the husbands he lashed for thoughtlessness or brutality, dared call him a hypocrite.

If he could have borne the burden of unhappiness for Margaret he would have been content this winter morning—"if"—that infernal "if"—

He jumped out of bed and took his plunge. He had known perfectly well when he began his wakeful rebellion against fate that it would end this way—it always had. He went down to breakfast rasped body and soul.

"You-all told me to remind you 'bout your talk to the ministers this morning, Doctah." Lily Pearl coquettish in the reddest of red jerseys and bright plaid skirts confronted him.

Dr. Bob groaned. He had completely forgotten this talk for the Erb Act. He should have been making notes last night—it was important. The ministerial association was provokingly luke-warm. It must be done! Margaret was depending on him to rouse them to enthusiasm. They needed their help. He thanked Lily Pearl and ordered another cup of coffee.

Ordinarily he would have embraced this opportunity with zest. The ministerial association was something of a power in Capitol City, when it chose to concern itself with other than theological matters. The meeting was to be held this morning at the home of one of his old friends, a genial doctor of divinity, who was wasting fine natural abilities, so the doctor believed, in routine religious services and much valuable time on a passion for begonias. It was the host's privilege to add something to the regular program on these occasions and Dr. Shields had informed Dr. Bob that here was his opportunity to bag the cloth for his hobby. His eyes had glinted mischievously as he gave the invitation, and he had neglected to mention the principal topic up for discussion. Dr. Bob had detected the betraying glint and had agreed joyfully, wondering what Shields was plotting. His mind reverted to it now. He was in fine fettle for a bout of wits, he reflected sarcastically. "A man of fifty-five had no business to wrack himself with emotions." Just then a golden beam of sunshine

caught the faded rose in an antique rug that lay by the window and deepened it into a jewel-like glow. He smiled and apostrophized it whimsically. "A century or two hasn't robbed you of all color and I guess the human soul is dyed with a pigment just as ineradicable."

Dr. Bob was late for that meeting. He was summoned in consultation where a little life was snuffing out from bad heredity. His presence was futile and the young parents' tragic grief beat upon his already clanging nerves intolerably.

"Poor fools," he grumbled to the physician in charge, as they stepped outside, "this hour was inevitable before that child was born—and we haven't the nerve to tell them so or to warn other young couples of the danger."

"Wouldn't do any good if we did," returned the other carelessly.

Dr. Shields' luxurious study was well-filled that morning. Capitol City divines prided themselves on their eclectic spirit. In proof of this they had invited Father Moran, a popular Catholic priest, to address them on "Divorce." He had already begun his address when the doctor arrived. He was a virile looking man with a fine shock of black hair, blue streaks along his cheeks after the most rigorous shave, and coarse hairy hands. He was in strong contrast to the delicately genteel Anglican who occupied the seat next to him. The men seated in the other chairs were fairly representative of their creeds and time. The entire circle had the alertly expectant air that the forensically inclined usually assume in the presence of a rival speaker. There had been much chaffing and cracking of jokes before the meeting opened. The subject seemed to have a gently titillating quality yet gave them a pleasing nobility of feeling as defenders of the sanctity of the home.

Father Moran talked for thirty minutes, giving the accepted thought of his communion on the sacred character of marriage and its consequent indissolubility. The discussion was then thrown open. Much complimentary comment followed with an occasional plea for divorce to be granted for cruelty or infidelity. The Anglican believed

that a legal separation was the remedy, even in such cases. A Unitarian brother inquired if he would not concede more if the pair were very young and manifestly unsuited to each other. "A lifetime is a long period," he ended suggestively.

Dr. Bob was surveying the group in amazement at this apparent unanimity of opinion and the paucity of discussion. Was this all they could find to say on a subject of such vital importance to the individual and the community? He wondered if they could have achieved such pleasing harmony if the subject had been transubstantiation or baptism, instead of the life relations of the large part of the human race. Were there no raw passions in these men—no divine compassion for everyday human wretchedness? Surely the priest and pastor must have laid bare for their healing, tortured hearts, poisoned lives, and dying self respect even as the surgeon had the quivering naked flesh submitted to the knife. Yet they conceded only infidelity and blows as conditions justifying the mercy of the law.

The doctor knotted up his relaxed muscles and got to his feet.

"If it is a fair question, and putting entirely aside the religious phase, has it been your observation that indissoluble marriage makes for happiness and purity in family life?" He addressed Father Moran. "You have rather unusual opportunities for knowing through the revelations of the confessional."

Father Moran's "Assuredly" was a little aggressive.

Dr. Bob probed further. "In cases where the husband was notoriously unfaithful would your church take action?"

"It might warn the man of the error of his ways."

"I see, but it would not feel justified in bringing any stronger pressure to bear. But in case the wife voices her distress?"

"She would be admonished to remember her marriage vows." The priest was becoming a bit restive.

"Suppose the man were known to be diseased? Would you still remind her of her vows?"

"I should carry out the instructions of my church regardless of rumors."

"In my years of practice I have had two cases of venereal disease where the victims have confided to me that they had at the confessional informed the priest of the husband's condition and begged for relief. One of these did so after the death of a child due to the disease. In such a case would you still consider the woman bound by her marriage vow?"

Father Moran's purple streaks were lost in a rich red which betokened irritation.

"In specially aggravated cases the church grants a separation."

"Have you ever known such a separation to be granted because of venereal disease?"

"I have never been morbid enough to spy into the intimate causes of the few separations I have known."

"I see," replied the doctor pleasantly, "you consider my professional interest indelicate."

"I regret to say I do."

"Unfortunately for the sacred nature of marriage, the underlying facts of unhappy marriages frequently are indelicate. I fully realize that I am presuming to intrude the pathological side of this relation into a purely religious discussion, yet it seems to me wholly pertinent. If I may have your indulgence I should like to address two questions to this entire association."

Dr. Bob paused for permission. The chairman nodded graciously. He had not been annoyed by Father Moran's slight embarrassment.

"Would you consider a woman morally justified in continuing to live in the marriage relation with a man whom she knew to be diseased?"

The ministerial association were to a man willing to forgo the second question after they had heard the first. Father Moran pleaded another engagement and fled to escape further conflicts between religion and its ancient foe, science. The chairman was game. He passed the question around the circle. One young minister answered unqualifiedly: "I would not!" His neighbor, a full-lipped man with

pimples, stated unctiously that marriage was for better and for worse . . . a woman would certainly not be justified in breaking her marriage vow because of her husband's misfortune. A rain of witticisms greeted this euphemism. But others too honest to connive at "misfortune" felt that the moral consequences of her refusal might be more deplorable than her acquiescence.

The members were more evenly divided on the subject than the doctor had anticipated. Their arguments were couched in more formal language but followed closely the arguments that would have been put forth by any group of men on the street. For the most part they argued not the direct ethics of the case but solely the question of expediency.

Dr. Bob's face hardened. "A generation, two generations ago, surely, but now in the face of modern science—how could they?" With all the public agitation of sex education it wasn't possible that they were ignorant. He put his second question with a distinct tightening of the lips.

"Statistics show that a very large percentage of the children born of parents afflicted with such diseases either die at birth, or are mentally or physically afflicted. Is the wife morally justified in blighting her child's life for the sake of fulfilling her obligations to her husband?"

This question broke up the harmony of the meeting as the doctor had prayerfully hoped. The words of St. Paul flowed freely in libations poured on the altar of the husband's rights. The minister with the spotted skin was especially aggressive. He argued that the whole weight of scriptural teaching made the woman subject to the man. The moral problem was not the woman's to decide, it was the man's. No properly reared woman should know anything about such diseases. He greatly deplored the immodest instruction introduced into the schools under the heading of health education. It was all very well for a boy, but the girl should never be permitted to soil her mind with such subjects. He believed it was becoming a fruitful source of divorce—

Dr. Bob interrupted him to hope that he was correct.

"He also believed that enlightening the woman as to the terrible effects of these diseases upon herself and her descendants—even unto the third generation—was a fruitful source of divorce. He was willing to go farther and say it ought to be a fruitful source of divorce." His even tones and suave smile gave no hint of the rising tide of indignation within him.

His opponent came back with more scripture. This was a materialistic attack on the sacredness of marriage and the sanctity of the home. It was worse than materialistic, it was anarchistic. He looked at the doctor suspiciously.

"But is not this knowledge the surest defense of the sanctity of the home?" protested the doctor patiently. "It means safe-guarding the lives and health of unborn children. It means that the marriage relation is a more sacred thing *per se* than the sacramental tie of the marriage ceremony." He had hard work to keep the floor here. He was treading too directly on sacerdotal authority. A dozen defenders of the faith considered this blasphemy. The survival of old monastic tradition still held them in its grip. The church had purified an unclean thing by its sanction. They were wholly sincere in believing that the man-arranged marriage ceremony was more sacredly binding than the God-ordained marriage union.

He listened with what patience he could command to various presentations of the ecclesiastical view point. Last night's bitterness was pouring back into his soul. This fanatical righteousness of rite and observance was filching away the compensatory exaltation of his own renunciation. He heard Margaret's voice pleading for moral freedom for the woman—he saw the graying face of the innocent child he had just left—he recalled his confrere's careless dismissal of blame for such tragedies. Someone must be responsible. The church? These followers of Christ were unthinkingly holding the cup of disease and death to the woman's lips and bidding her drink. A burning flame of indignation caught him. They should know what they were doing before they left that room if there were any power in words.

"Just a moment, gentlemen, may I have the floor?"

There was an arresting force in the quietly uttered words. The hum subsided.

"You and I are working for the same end—to protect the family—there should be no room for acrimonious debate—will you listen to me for just a moment? Thank you. I promise not to detain you long. I want to go back a little into history. Church and State have always sought to protect the family in some form. And it has usually been a pitiful case of the blind guarding the blind. Ignorance and prejudice and passion have each taken a turn at the blundering until human society instead of ameliorating the brutalities of nature has aggravated them. The simple brute instinct of the male to protect his female and the young has degenerated in man into ownership. The cave man acquired possession by carrying off the woman, developing civil authority confirmed his possession. Next, priest and prophet obligingly added the sanction of divinity to the transaction. As civilization progressed they salved their awakening consciences by certain stipulations as to how the woman should be treated. Even Christianity has never gone beyond this."

There was an ominous stir—a leaning forward in chairs. The doctor put up his hand.

"I am not going to attack Christianity. Churchman and infidel were equally ignorant of modern pathology and of biological laws. Their culpability was nothing compared with ours for we know, friends, or can know, the hideous consequences of this subjection of the woman to the man. It has been a boomerang that has brought upon the human race a large percentage of its miseries. How large a percentage science itself hardly dares estimate. Nature gave to the woman the nurture and the guarding of the young. Society and religion between them have tried to improve on the Almighty by taking as many of the prerogatives of this guardianship away from her as possible. Nature gave to the female the right to bestow her favors. Society and religion have coerced the woman into involuntary submission to the husband. They gave him the custody of her person, of her property, of her children, and as if that were not enough, the church added the lure of

heaven and the fear of hell to subdue her will—just a moment more. And what has been the result of this submission of the wife's will to the husband's? Shall I tell you? Unrestrained marital license on the part of the man, and often a lifetime of enforced prostitution on the part of the woman. And human society is paying the reckoning; in morons, in idiots, in epilepsy, in locomotor ataxia, in blindness, in many strange and nauseous diseases. Can a sacramental marriage produce these atrocities? Many marriages the church has stamped sacramental have done exactly this. I can prove it. You ministers deal with the spiritual effects of sin. We doctors are brought face to face with sin incarnate in the flesh. You are trying to fight it with prayer and fasting and sermons and sacraments. We are trying to fight it with the latest discoveries of science. We need your help as you need ours. And the remedy is not tying the woman up in indissoluble marriage—the remedy is to face the cold facts. Teach the man the sanctity of marriage not as it affects the individual but as it affects the race. Teach him that it is as much a crime to pollute the source of life in any woman's body as it would be to put poison in drinking water. Teach him that far beyond his fealty to his wife he owes a fealty to creation, and that to wilfully transmit diseased life is to sin against the Holy Ghost. Teach the woman that it is a crime to yield her body to a diseased man no matter how many years he has called her wife. Teach her that she is dooming not only her children but her children's children to untold miseries, if she does this thing. Teach her that however beautiful and self sacrificing her love, it becomes sinful and inordinate affection if it imperils the sources of life. And it is idle to teach her this until you make her an independent human being. That little word obey in the marriage service often healthily disregarded now, so tragically enforced still in many lands, has wrought more evil and tragedy in the world than Nero and the Kaiser and a hundred more of the worst despots in history. Their depredations were limited by the spans of their short human lives, its effects bid fair to go on while time endures. I hold the church's ideal of sacramental marriage one of

the most beautiful the human spirit has ever conceived. But it is an ideal only possible of realization in a state of chastity, of absolute equality, of mental and physical health. Forgive me, I had not meant to be so wordy."

Dr. Bob sank into a chair wearily, a little disgusted at his own fervor. Whether his harangue ever changed the viewpoint of any of the reverend gentlemen present he never knew. He was called away to a case and did not even hear the debate. But the ministerial association was abundantly revenged. He had argued away his opportunity for presenting the merits of the Erb Act. In fact, he completely forgot it till he went home for lunch. Lily Pearl recurred to the subject with feminine persistence.

"You all didn't forget your speech, did you?"

Dr. Bob glanced up in ludicrous dismay. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he ejaculated.

Lily Pearl looked her scorn. The doctor defended himself.

"No, I made one of the best speeches I have ever perpetrated," he affirmed with a chuckle.

The absurdity of the situation acted like a tonic. The night before faded into unreality. He ate Mammy's apple dumplings with such a relish as never kept company with either sorrow or disillusionment. Ate, and was refreshed, and went back to his day's work of healing, comforted. Such little things count in the sum of our well-being.

But the doctor's step was heavy when he went up to bed that night. He felt the loss of sleep as he would not have done ten years earlier. He was troubled over his outburst of the morning.

"That was a careless trick to let myself be so carried away that I forgot the very thing I went to do—a careless trick! I guess I'm getting along. And last night I was chafing like a young fool! A careless trick—and we need their help—we need it!"

Dr. Bob wound his watch and went to bed.

## CHAPTER XII

### ANOTHER ANGLE

VEDA had settled down after her interview with Jock early in January to a deadening conviction of failure. She was not fit to presume to lead the girls when she could not even influence her own friend. She told herself over and over that Connie Brown or a dozen of the other girls given her opportunity, would have won Minette's confidence and prevented the tragedy she was sure had befallen her. Veda's conscience was at once her strength and her weakness. Veda was inter-penetrated with the awe of life. She walked too continuously among the stars. Not quite adaptable enough to see her mates' problems through their eyes, she often erred by taking trivial things too seriously. If the gods had given her a lightsome touch along with her native sweetness and intelligence no human being could have resisted her. Lacking it, she was a leader who must often fail through expecting too much. In this case her excessive penitence over Minette preyed upon her common sense. She was humbled out of her usual quick powers of decision, a state of mind Ivan was quick to recognize, and to try to take advantage of for his own ends.

He thought she was making a most unnecessary fuss over Minette's disappearance. He still had the Russian peasant's view of women, one more or less—provided it did not happen to be *the* one—did not matter greatly. Ivan certainly did not mean to worry. Minette had given him to understand rather plainly on one occasion that she did not consider him good enough for Veda. He had laughed scornfully at the idea. Veda was a working girl, he was a laboring man; but he did not intend to remain a laboring man. He would have said the advantage was on his

side. Veda might be thankful that he had picked her out to share his future with him. He knew she was slightly better educated than he. He had not failed to observe in her a certain self confidence that made her at home with her superiors in a fine simple way where most of the L. and A. girls would have been either awkward or self-assertive. He did not trouble himself as to the reason for this. He had the Russian peasant's stolid acceptance of simple fact.

When this poise held him at arm's length, as not infrequently happened, he deplored it. "A girl could have pep and hold up her head without trying out any of that high and mighty business on her man."

Veda had never told Ivan her origin. To what end revive a tragedy of Bolshevism, she said to herself. She was a merchant's daughter in Moscow and had been bred gently and luxuriously up to her seventeenth year. The first revolution had brought her father into considerable prominence and had gained him the ill-will of some of his humbler neighbors. When the Reds came into power these grudges were satisfied bestially. Father, mother, small brother were murdered. Their property went to the state as represented by certain local officials and the zealots who had betrayed them. Veda escaped with the help of her old nurse who had a soldier son in the local soviet. She was hidden away for weeks until a new danger made her fly from her protectors. Her girlish charms went to the soldier's head. He persuaded his mother that the only way for him to continue to guard her nursling was to make her his bride. Veda fled once more and succeeded in making her way first to Finland and later to this country as maid to an American lady who befriended her. She was too proud to remain long a servant. Securing a place in an eastern factory, she had been lured by the tales of the L. and A. comforts and had come to Capitol City where she had rapidly risen to be a forewoman and had soon achieved a position of influence among her mates. It was not a pleasant history to relate. She had told Ivan of her struggle in this country with a sturdy pride, but some unexplained instinct sealed her lips with regard to her people. Their martyrdom had canonized them in her memory.

They were set apart from any profane touch in the sacred sanctuary of her love. Possibly she felt Ivan could not understand this feeling. His was a temperament wholly without sentiment. She knew this and forgave it.

She had been drawn to Ivan first because of their common nationality, then she had been caught by his dash and magnetism. She knew he came of a class beneath her own. But she recognized his ambition and his qualities of leadership. They would rise together, she persuaded herself. During the early months of their betrothal she was happy. The new relationship was doubly precious because of the desolate years of utter aloneness she had been forced to endure. Had Ivan been the generous-spirited man she at first thought him, Veda might never have been repelled by his coarseness. She realized too thoroughly how brutalizing the life of the Russian peasant had been. She would gladly have helped him to overcome this. But Ivan was far from acknowledging his need of education, along any line. He expected and demanded from her continuous adulation.

For weeks before the coming of Mayern, Veda had been puzzled by a new preoccupation of Ivan's. He was deeply interested in something which he described vaguely as "the movement." He emphatically denied that it was revolutionary. Ivan knew Veda was unfriendly to the Reds. He bantered her often about her foolish prejudice; he never concerned himself as to its cause. He knew very definitely of the horrible acts of the Bolshevik régime in his own native land but he did not believe the American proletariat would ever go to such lengths. Indeed, he was so confident that victory would be easy for the revolutionists that he had refused to consider the terrible side at all. The revolution meant merely a reversal in the positions of the rich and poor. Like Mayern he counted fully upon the same peace and safety, the same luxuries and opportunities that made America so desirable to-day. Only he and his kind would be at the top.

When Veda, fearing his radicalism, hinted at the terrors which her own eyes had seen, he laughed indulgently. She had been a mere child he assured her. Her imagination

had exaggerated. But he was sufficiently impressed by her antagonism not to tell her when he joined the Reds. He did not consider it advisable for her to know until the trap was sprung. He had no intention of having to justify his course to his woman.

But with the New York delegate's demand for funds, he faced a difficulty. He needed Veda's help and he was finding it impossible to secure it on any showing either he or Mayern had made. The men were joining the companies in gratifying numbers. The exercise and the adventure of the thing appealed to most of the young men. But there was little ready money. The older working men had saved but little. Their families were continually demanding new luxuries. The unmarried were spending all they earned upon themselves even as the *jeunesse dorée* spent what their fathers had earned in reckless amusement. The temper of the two sets of young men was almost identical. The amusements of one class cost less than the amusements of the other, but both spent all they could lay their hands upon for pleasure, and went as far as they dared.

And "the movement" must have funds. Ivan and the other leaders preached present sacrifice for the sake of the golden future with rather meager results. Youth had not acquired the habit of sacrificing itself for anything. The time came when they realized that they needed the women to stimulate enthusiasm. Ivan resolved that Veda must help him willy nilly. But America is not Russia. It is not easy to coerce the unmarried woman in America. After marriage the task is easier especially when there are children. Ivan thought seriously of persuading Veda to an early marriage. But Ivan did not wish to tie his own youth down to a family till the success of the movement had provided the luxuries to make family life comfortable. He had no intention of having his night's rest disturbed by having to walk the floor with squalling children. He had seen too much of that at the Schmidts'.

Veda was deep in her campaign for the Erb Act. The girls had raised several hundred dollars among themselves for the work. They had coaxed several hundred more from the men, both from those who approved and from those who

at heart wished the bill to fail. Ivan knew that Garth Hardwick, who for weeks had been merely tolerant, had ended by handing Veda a cheque for five hundred dollars. The L. and A. girls were astonishingly well organized. They held frequent meetings to keep their enthusiasm at white heat. They paraded the streets with transparencies. They distributed literature. They gave of their evenings for simple clerical work. They had a representative on the Woman's Legislative Committee of Capitol City.

Mr. Bracy Landis knew of these activities and frothed, but Mr. Landis did not dare to invite labor troubles of his own by objecting. Garth Hardwick, watching their campaign with some curiosity, was soon intrigued by Veda's earnestness. He ended not a convert to the practicability of the Erb Act, but so impressed by the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of the women, that he wanted to see them given a fighting chance. Minette's disappearance and the rôle of the ermine cape had also had an influence. It certainly would simplify moral problems if you could stop such bribery. It was against all human experience to believe it possible—still there was no harm in letting the women try.

Ivan was also impressed by the perfection of the women's organization. Here was the very instrument the movement needed ready to its hand, if he could once get control of it. And what more natural than that he, as fiancé of its president and leading spirit, should suggest, if not dictate its policy. Were women no longer to be controlled by their affections? He meant to ascertain, with regard to one particular woman, at any rate.

He had found it almost impossible to see Veda alone. Out of work hours she was at committee meetings, conferring with Mrs. DeWitt and the Club Federation leaders, or attending night sessions of the legislature. She was growing thin and her creamy pallor was taking on a slightly unhealthy cast from overwork and loss of sleep.

He began to hound her, joining her on her way to and from the factory, insisting on her giving up evenings to him for movies and other amusements. He called for her uninvited at Mrs. DeWitt's and at the legislature. He

developed an uncanny cunning in guessing or otherwise discovering her whereabouts. And Veda might have been thankful for his presence. Since Minette's disappearance she had felt the need of love and sympathy as never before. But Ivan did not come to her proffering either love or sympathy. He came incessantly demanding this one thing, that she help him raise money for his movement.

Veda took her stand on two issues. She could not successfully work for two entirely separate enterprises at one and the same time, and she would not support any organization of which she knew so little as this home promoting enterprise. They went over the same ground with increasing mutual distrust and anger until even Ivan's egoistic stubbornness realized that it was no use to pursue this tack any longer. He next began a policy of letting her severely alone. He selected the prettiest and most reckless girl at the works and took her everywhere. But if Veda had any love remaining for her nagging fiancé she was too clever to show jealousy. She let him go his way without a sign. And at the end of three weeks, if his recreancy had influenced her, he could not discover it.

He jumped to the conclusion that Hardwick was to blame for her coldness—that he had been to blame for all their quarrels from the first. He began to nurse a smoldering, sullen hatred of the boss. But he did not mean to give up Veda. More than ever he was determined to bend her to his will. His desire for dominating possession was fed a hundred fold by her resistance. He almost hated her at times especially when his mates chaffed him about losing her. Small personal matters were on everyone's tongue in the intimacy of such a community life as the L. and A. Ivan was not infrequently arrogant in spite of his attitude of hail fellow, and the malevolent were too well aware that something was seriously wrong between him and Veda to miss any opportunity for annoying him.

One evening he came into the men's dining room late much ruffled by an insolent letter from Mayern intimating that if Ivan did not have sufficient influence to raise Capitol City's assessment more promptly, the U. X. W. must find someone else who could. Ivan's place was at a table

near the head of the room. He discovered before he had advanced a dozen steps that his appearance was the cause of much joking at the tables. He was greeted with open mirth when he seated himself.

"Well," he snapped angrily, "what are you fools up to now?"

"Up to? What we want to know is what you're up to to let your skirt give you the sack this way?" His neighbor was gloatingly delighted to be able to annoy him.

"Yes, Ivan, you'd better get on the job if you expect to have any pure bred Russians at the L. and A."

Ivan's face blazed into red fury at this indecent sally.

"Spit your venom out, can't you? What's eating you?"

But the crowd was finding it better sport to keep him mystified.

"The boss isn't so much of a looker," sneered another, "but he evidently knows how to get the goods."

Ivan turned on him like a flash—he was at last getting a glimmer. "The boss?"

"Sure, the boss, motor sleigh that would dazzle your eyes—dark red and brass trimmings—didn't think the boss would drive anything so sporty—he's always been such a plain guy. S'pose when the right girl comes along though it'll make even a chap like Hardwick swell up."

"You mean?" Ivan's eyes were like coals.

"Sure I mean! She fitted in fine. Veda's some looker when she takes the trouble to get herself up. Had a red dufony on her head that matched the out fit to a T-e-e-e. And her cheeks were redder than her hat. The boss handed her out like she was Miss Morgan Rockefeller. Better get busy, Ivan."

This last taunt was superfluous. Ivan's fist shot out with no word of warning and the two had to retire outside to finish the interview. Then he went straight to Veda scarcely waiting to wash the blood that had flowed from his opponent's sorely smitten nose, off his hands.

Veda came down to the little waiting room—the L. and A. provided a half dozen such in Dormitory No. 2 for the benefit of "followers"—with cheeks still glowing from ad-

dressing a wonderful meeting at the principal woman's club. A meeting to which Hardwick had hurried her, at Mrs. DeWitt's request, after the factory closed at five. He had borrowed Mr. Landis' newly arrived motor sleigh because of the desperate condition of the streets. The heaviest snow fall of the season had almost blocked them. He had not been asked to wait and return her to L. and A. but he held that no gentleman could do less in such weather.

If the rides with Hardwick and his cordial praise of her speech, had as much to do with bringing the unusual color to Veda's cheeks as the excitement of her effort or the sharp wintry air, she had not yet had time to realize it. She was breathlessly jubilant over her first attempt at addressing an educated audience. She had talked to the girls many times, but it had taken much encouragement to persuade her that she could interest a more intellectual class. But they had listened—it warmed her to remember how deferentially they had listened, after she was fairly started. Both Mrs. DeWitt and Hardwick were amazed at her clear terse sentences, at her power of passionate advocacy and her simple dignity. Veda was not the born crusader as was Dr. Bob. She was a crusader because of that tragic past—because of the leaning upon her of scores of younger and less intelligent girls there in the L. and A. Her eloquence this evening had been fired by a sacrificial desire to make reparation for her failure to Minette. If she could help to win through this law to protect thousands of young girls, surely a forgiving heaven would accept it as atonement for her fault to one. Oriental fatalism and the occidental Christian conscience were curiously at variance in her. Her joy over her success was not wholly a satisfaction in duty well done; it was mingled with a frank glorying in her own powers. It intoxicated her spirit to know that she was capable of dominating these women, who held themselves her superiors, even momentarily. She came down to meet Ivan in a state of excitement bordering upon exaltation. Nothing was farther from her mind than her relation to him.

Ivan was mad with jealousy. He had not seated him-

self while he waited. He was pacing up and down in fierce impatience. He accused her before she had fairly entered the room.

"What do you mean by running around with the boss?" He put his hands on her shoulders as if he would shake her.

Veda drew back in amazement.

"Oh, you don't need to try to play innocent. You haven't lived all these years at the L. and A. not to know that every runt in the plant would be taunting me with losing my girl after your performance. Suppose you were tickled to death to make a sensation. Thought it made you look smart to be riding round with the boss, eh? If you knew what the men were saying you wouldn't be quite so pleased with yourself." He approached her again. He wanted to lay hands on her to vindicate his ownership.

Veda backed away. Never before had Ivan been actually repulsive to her though she had shrunk from him more than once of late. To-night she felt that if he touched her again she should scream.

Her avoidance cut him like a knife. He loved the girl more than he could ever have been brought to acknowledge, but stronger than his love, was his craze of possession. He would have fought for her just as fiercely if he had believed she hated him. She was his property. No man should filch her from him—least of all a capitalist.

"Ivan, are you crazy?"

"If I'm not, it's no thanks to you. I tell you for the last time I won't have it—I—"

"Won't have what?"

"Won't have you going out with Hardwick, and don't you forget it!"

"I have never gone out with Mr. Hardwick before in my life. I did not know I was going with him today. Mrs. DeWitt told me she would send someone for me this afternoon so I could get to the meeting in time."

"What meeting?"

Veda explained patiently.

"It's all an excuse—that DeWitt woman is working you to get your help to boost her deals. You needn't tell me a woman's fussing round the legislature for any good. She

knows it flatters you to have anything to do with the boss. Maybe he hasn't taken you out before. I served notice on him some time ago he could just let you alone. He's been too big a coward to be seen publicly with you before—but he's tricked you into coming to his office to consult about Minette. Maybe you think you've been so slick I ain't on to your doings! Maybe you think I don't know he handed you a check for five hundred dollars for your foolishness. You are too high and mighty to help your betrothed collect a little money for a good cause, but you ain't above wheedling his worst enemy out of a wad for yourself. How am I to know you're using it for your cause? I hear you were all dolled up tonight—I haven't seen you in nothing new for months. Don't waste your finery on me—save it up for swells like the boss, I suppose!" Ivan plunged on into angry incoherence.

Veda tried once or twice to interrupt without avail. She listened till he had worn himself out. Her first impulse of resentment had changed into pity for his pain. She had never dreamed of making him suffer like this. She had not even thought of Ivan when Hardwick drove up for her. Her one anxiety had been to get through her speech creditably. On their return she had observed the attention they were attracting and had reproached herself for permitting Hardwick to bring her home. She had intended to call up Ivan after dinner and explain the situation to him before the busybodies had time to tattle. Things had happened too swiftly for this. Now, she realized he was as utterly unreasoning and pitiable as a child and her impulse to mother him overcame her physical shrinking.

He had thrown himself in a big chair shaking from his outburst. After a moment she went to him and kneeled down beside him.

"Ivan, are you always going to be like this?" She slipped her hand into his. His fingers closed convulsively over hers.

"I didn't mean to do anything wrong—I shouldn't have let Mr. Hardwick bring me home—only—it seemed rather rude to refuse after he had waited for me. Oh, Ivan, can't

you see I'm nothing to him? He just thinks I'm useful at the plant—looking after the girls—and that sort of thing. He never thinks of me in the way you imagine. I'm not so stupid that I couldn't see if a man were falling in love with me. You see, you foolish boy, you think everybody sees me with your eyes. Most of the men haven't any use for me because I'm so serious and don't doll up like the other girls—but—"

"And they're right to—you ought to doll up like the rest. You'd be a lot handsomer if you'd stop wearing yourself out with other people's business and get into some gayer clothes. Why can't you get something pink or—red—" The red revived his grievance. "Go get that hat you wore this afternoon," he commanded abruptly.

Veda smiled a wry amazed smile and obeyed, coming back with the glowing red turban perched almost coquettishly on her heavy dark coils.

Ivan was enraptured. He admired and ended by taking her in his arms and forgiving her in passionate kisses. He confessed no fault on his part but insisted on taking her out to a picture show that all who saw might be convinced that she was still his. Veda humored him with a heavy heart. The glow of the afternoon had entirely faded from her face. Her buoyant sense of power had ebbed. She was once more merely Ivan's betrothed.

Another incident that came fast on the heels of this one did not end so peacefully. Ivan felt that he had conquered on this occasion and he meant to keep the advantage he believed he had gained. His first thought had been to coax her into giving him part of Hardwick's check for the U. X. W., but Veda had providentially turned that over to the general campaign fund within an hour after it was placed in her hands.

But her lover was persistent. She should help him whether she wished to or not. He tormented and raged without avail till one evening when Veda, at Mrs. DeWitt's request, was to attend an evening session of the legislature. Ivan had arranged to call for her. He was running no further chances of Hardwick's escort. It was after eleven when they came down the steps of the capitol, a raw moist

February night. The snow was gone and the sky pressed down upon them a starless black weight. Veda drew her coat collar closer about her throat.

"What a black night!" she said.

She was surprised when Ivan piloted her down the long flight of marble steps and up to a waiting taxi.

"Why, Ivan, you extravagant creature, it's sweet of you but you ought not,"

"Huh, guess the boss isn't the only one can put on style round the L. and A.," Ivan replied loftily.

Veda was tired and she leaned back against the soft upholstery with a little grateful sigh at his unexpected consideration. The taxi sped down the street and she watched the lights slip by in supreme content for several minutes. Ivan was asking questions about a speaker to whom he had listened in the senate while he waited for her.

"Why didn't you come in and sit down? It was too bad for you to stand round so long outside the door."

"Oh, I haven't any truck with that gang . . . those chaps are working for the plutocrats—they don't want anything to do with the working man except to steal him blind. When we want anything we know how to get it quicker than fooling round legislatures." Ivan chuckled knowingly.

Veda gave him a swift searching look. This was surely bolshevism! Ivan usually betrayed most of his thoughts to her because he could not resist the impulse to boast. But aside from his revelation the morning after she had watched at the Schmidts', he had guarded his tongue sedulously. Because he had guarded it so well, she had begun to suspect he had some unusual reason for guarding it. She had distrusted Mayern on the morning of their meeting most profoundly. In thinking of him afterwards, she felt sure he was a Red. She had come to know the type in the days when she had been a fugitive. A quicker method? Quicker? What could that mean but "direct action," sabotage and the U. X. W.?

She scrutinized his face with a tremor of apprehension. Surely, Ivan was no such fool as to be plotting with them—a man with his opportunities. But he was inordinately

ambitious—he expected to get rich suddenly . . . his boast that she should have a mansion and wear evening dress, as if she had not already worn a low-cut dress to their elaborate dances, proved this. He had not meant the simple dance frocks of the factory girls—he had meant the rich creations of modistes—and sumptuous wraps.

Veda was so busy studying over this disquieting idea that she did not notice that they had long since passed the turn they should have taken for the L. and A. dormitory, or that the houses were thinning along the street and the lights stringing out at longer intervals. Ivan made an occasional observation, but contrary to his usual habit, seemed entirely willing to have her absorbed in her own thoughts.

She came to, with a start to find they had left all lights behind and were out on a country road.

“Why—Ivan, where are we?—the chauffeur must be lost.”

“Oh, not so’s you’d notice it.” Ivan spoke easily with a crafty smile.

“Ivan, where are you taking me?” She clutched his arm in sudden fear.

“Oh, just for a little ride. I’ve been wanting to have a serious talk with you for some time and I thought I’d fix it so’s there wouldn’t be anybody round to interrupt.”

“Ivan, for God’s sake, what do you mean?”

“Don’t get so excited, honey, can’t you trust your man? If you’re reasonable, I’ll have you back at No. 2 in less than half an hour. Nobody’ll ever know you’ve been on a joy ride.”

“Reasonable?—and if I’m not reasonable?”

“Well, I might have to argue with you till you are—if it takes all night. We’ve got all the time there is, and I guess we’d as well settle some little matters right here and now.”

Veda looked from him to the blackness outside. From the gloom without, her gaze wandered to the chauffeur’s back. He was a big burly man. She hadn’t particularly noticed his face. She leaned impulsively forward and tapped on the glass.

"Please take me straight to the L. and A.," she ordered crisply, when he turned at her summons. The man grinned and looked at Ivan for confirmation of her order. Ivan shook his head. "Sorry, miss, but the gent hired me." He turned back to the dark road ahead. He had slackened speed considerably.

Veda set her lips in a straight red line. What was Ivan trying to force her into? She might as well find out.

"What do you want, Ivan?"

"Oh, ho! Now you're talking! I just want you to take a little human interest in my affairs instead of putting in all your time on this fool Erb Act which is none of a woman's business, anyway. You girls think you're so plaguey smart that you can muzzle the men and make little woolly lambs out of us. It's pretty near time to teach you not to monkey with the buzz saw. What do I want? I want you to promise to raise me a thousand dollars for my movement inside of the next month. And if you don't promise, my dear, you'll not see Dormitory No. 2 till morning light. And I guess after that Mrs. DeWitt and the rest of your stylish friends won't be so keen for your acquaintance."

Veda saw he was thoroughly in earnest. He meant to break her to his will, never doubting that he could do it. She was slow to anger, but this outrage roused her to an indignation perilously near to hatred of the man beside her. She saw him at last as he was, and she believed no impulse of pity could ever make her tolerate him again. For a few futile moments she tried argument. Her appeals merely fed his sense of mastery. She tried blandishments though she knew this was dangerous in her present helplessness. This fed his conceit. She realized with actual physical nausea that she must cope with brute force again as in the old days in Russia. She searched her every recollection of their hours together for a clue to move him. Should she open the heartbreaking past? Perhaps—it seemed the only hope. Surely he would have pity if he knew.

She began dully with labored phrases, then as bitter memories whirled her along, she sketched eloquently every

brutal detail. Her eyes were burning; her strong nervous fingers picked at the fringe of the blanket robe.

Ivan listened in amazement at first, then with a shrug of his shoulders, tried to stop her. She was not to be stopped. The dikes of her reserve once down, her wrongs poured forth relentlessly. The chauffeur turned round and stared at her curiously through the glass.

His action annoyed Ivan. He grasped Veda by the arm and gave her a little shake. "Can that sob stuff! The sooner you forget it the better. We're not planning a massacre—you're on the wrong track. This Movement is exactly what I told you, to give us better homes. And what I want to know is whether you're going to come through and help us."

She stared at him helplessly for an instant while she dragged her thoughts back from the agony she had been re-living. It meant nothing to him. Nothing save an annoyingly disagreeable happening he did not wish to hear about. She struggled with a strained hysterical desire to laugh. This was what their frenzy of love had come to! It had never been anything but youth's absorbing passion of mating—she could see clearly now—and with her it was over—gloriously over! At last she was free for her work!

There was nothing left but to trick him. She would not give in. She would not stoop to promise—even if she were desperate. She would outwit him—the stupid peasant!

Veda's new world democracy fell from her and left her clad in old world prejudice—a myriad impalpable links of habit and tradition. She despised herself that she could ever have descended to Ivan's level. She caught her red underlip between her white teeth and bit it cruelly.

Then she fell to and planned. In the distance she caught the light of an interurban car bound cityward. She remembered that these cars ran every twenty minutes up to one o'clock. It must be nearly midnight now. If she could open the taxi door unobserved and leap outside, she believed the night was dark enough to hide her. Surely she would be able to make her way to the car track. Turning to Ivan calmly she began to ask questions as to how he thought the money might be raised. She demanded a pen-

cil and paper to set down some figures. Ivan was rejoiced at her sudden yielding. He obligingly had the chauffeur stop the car and himself set down the items for her, using his knee for a desk. Veda leaned confidently toward him looking over his shoulder while her hand felt softly for the door handle. The chauffeur had settled down comfortably in his seat. When she found the door yielding to her touch, she suddenly flung it wide and sprang out.

Ivan, starting up with a curse, leaped after her. But the night was pitchy dark after the lighted interior of the taxi. Veda had on rubbers and she ran into the herbage along the roadside which helped to still further deaden her footsteps. The road was thickly bordered with trees and brush. Slipping through this barrier she gained the field beyond and ran noiselessly, save for her hurried breathing.

She stumbled over a root presently in the blackness and fell headlong. She lay still an instant listening, then sprang to her feet and sped on till she came to a board fence. Scaling it, she crouched breathlessly down on the farther side.

There seemed nothing near except varying depths of blackness, but she could see gleams of light in the road where Ivan and the chauffeur were searching the irrigation ditch and the bushes alongside. She waited for several minutes, then cautiously rose and made her way across the fields toward the car track. She was almost upon the rails without perceiving them, when she heard the humming of the approaching car.

She dared not take the first one lest Ivan should try to intercept her somewhere. The lights of the taxi had been extinguished. He might be speeding back to waylay her near the dormitory. So she waited endless minutes, concealing herself against a tree till the next car sent its light along the track. This she boldly boarded and arrived safely at the dormitory a little after one without further molestation.

The night porter blinked when she came in.

"You must have had a tarnation long session, tonight. You're going it pretty strong, ain't you, Vedy, for a girl as has to work all day!"

Veda made a laughing reply and hurried to her room. She hoped he had not noticed her muddy feet or the tear in her coat where she had snagged it in the bushes.

As she undressed she wondered if people would believe her if she were to tell the night's adventures. It would sound banally like the movies. She did not mean to tell them. Her fear was past. She stretched her round white arms over her head in a luxurious supple gesture of relief. Her whole body seemed throbbing with a new-found power—with an indomitable youth that was no longer dependent on any man's smile or frown.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ELUSIVE VOTE

**A**T two P. M. on the twenty-seventh of February in the year of our Lord 192- the Capital was alive with determined citizens. The number of public-spirited patriots who came out for the express purpose of saving "this important western commonwealth from destructive legislation" was larger than any similar assembly since the good old days when United States senators were elected by state legislatures. The advocates and the opponents of the Erb Act were equally omnipresent and partisan. The Honorable Bracy Landis and a number of other substantial citizens occupied seats on the floor of the senate chamber.

This was a distinct point of vantage as it enabled them to whisper encouraging suggestions to the leaders of the opposition. The weight of their physical presence was not inconsiderable not to mention the convincing ponderosity of the aggregated interests they represented. What mere legislator could stand out against a collective wisdom backed by so many millions. Twenty years previous, few would have tried. But these were the days of the proletariat. Of the proletariat only a few groups of women were enthusiastically for the Erb Act. Its ardent supporters came almost entirely from the great harried middle-class. Their influence was not what it once had been or would be again, but they were workers and the bill's opponents were worried.

When the President's gavel fell there was not an empty seat in the gallery or visible standing room either there or at the rear of the main floor. Margaret DeWitt and Veda Brussilov sat with a group of prominent club-women at one end of the gallery where they could see the senator's faces.

Margaret had had much experience in reading faces during the last few weeks. Governor Gregg had been astute in his assertion that her position on the state board of Correction and Charities would give her an influence she could never have wielded as a private citizen. But Margaret was sick at heart over the wire-pulling and graft it had revealed to her. With Derrick's experience and aid and her own clear common-sense she had managed to keep fairly clear of entanglements. But she was perfectly aware that at least five of the votes the Erb Bill had received in the House or would gain in the Senate this afternoon were due to the confident hope of the voters that she would favor certain candidates of theirs for lucrative appointments in state institutions. She had firmly declined to make any such promises. But when she was assured by some gentlemanly legislator that he was giving the measure his ardent support entirely at her request, it was a trifle difficult to repudiate the suggestion of a considerable obligation in return.

Margaret was familiar with the senate chamber from much lobbying. She looked about it now with a vague sense of unreality. She was near a nervous break down from the combined strain of her public work, and the tension of her husband's unrelenting disapproval at home. The bronze clock face above the president's chair seemed to be leering at the gilt cupids which flanked it. The papery trees and sun-flowers of the mural above the clock appeared to be waving gently in the imaginery wind of the artist's vision. She looked down at the stout desks below to steady herself. These and their occupants had some quality of stability.

It was hard to realize the chamber as the setting for a state's lawmakers. The yellow onyx paneling and door frames, the mahogany doors, the heavy gilt moldings, the semi-circular desk for the clerks with its strips of green blotting pad, the domestic touch of neat ferns and spotless geraniums—one rose, and one vivid scarlet—on the ends of the president's desk; all combined to produce a rich, bizarre, irrational effect absolutely unrelated to any logical process of life.

She had the whimsical fancy that a bird cage suspended above the president's head was the only thing needed to make the senatorial environment a howling farce.

The conventional words of the invocation roused her. The guidance of deity was the last thing most of the honorable senators desired. The House had passed the Erb Act the night before after one of the most hotly contested battles in its history with one vote to spare. No human being knew what the senate was about to do. It looked as if the fate of the Bill depended upon the vote of the senator from the third district. If this were true the decision was more than ever in doubt for he had changed his mind twenty times in half that number of days. Margaret and some of the women from his own district had just had a lengthy interview with him in which he almost pledged himself to vote for the bill. At present Margaret noted that he was sitting beside Mr. Bracy Landis and looked well pleased with his environment.

Her glance wandered to the two women senators. One was a gray-haired, composed looking, soul against whose calm, partisan storms apparently beat in vain. The woman had been a member for three terms and had discovered that the heavens did not fall even though the most necessary and desirable measures frequently failed, while those backed by individual greed usually wriggled through. The other was younger, fussily self-conscious, and fearful that she should not do all that was expected of her. A weakness the designing had already played upon to advantage. Margaret fell to wondering what the attitude of the husbands of these women might be toward these distracting duties of citizenship. Was the fussy one made more nervous by conjugal fault finding at home? She did not believe they suffered from the refinement of disapproval which oppressed her. The average man's dissatisfaction with his spouse was wont to be blatant. The calm "Lady from Capitol City" had evidently put all domestic distractions behind her long ago. Yet Margaret noted a little setness of the mouth that bore testimony to obstacles overcome. Had she made her fight years before? And how had it come out? Margaret would have

given much to know such private guiding details of other women's lives.

This was just the trouble with the most vital problems of life, one never had the opportunity to draw on the rich book of human experience which alone could furnish precedent or warning. One had only fiction, and most fiction conformed to what the writer thought the crowd wanted to believe. Perhaps not even that—rather it represented what the writer believed the influential publishers believed the crowd wanted to read. True an occasional crusading spirit or seeker after notoriety broke away from mass thinking, and this was often helpfully suggestive but seldom convincing. If one could have the domestic autobiographies of old people given in the scientific spirit, what invaluable data some hundreds of such human experiences would be.

She was recalled from her musing by a sudden irruption into the already crowded gallery.

"The idea of bringing children here with a question like this coming up!" exclaimed the woman on her right in deep disgust.

"From the School of Education, I suppose. I wonder they don't take them down on Alley Street to complete their practical knowledge of such matters!"

Margaret smiled. "Their teacher never took the trouble to find out what bills were up for consideration."

Some twenty fresh-faced boys and girls in their early teens were pouring in, and trying to filter into imperceptible vacancies between the perspiring ranks of their elders. They were eager and expectant, believing they were about to have the majestic mysteries of free government unrolled before their eyes.

The president of the senate watched them silently for several dismayed seconds then suggested to the teacher in charge that this was hardly a favorable occasion for instructing the young, and that the visiting children would do better to go to the House which was passing appropriation bills.

The teacher, flushed and embarrassed, speedily recalled her charges and hurried them out, all save one or two

enterprising boys who made themselves inconspicuous and were overlooked.

"It is a disgrace," said one lady audibly to her row, "that any subject should be discussed in our legislative halls which the children cannot be permitted to hear."

"Why not go a step farther," retorted a man on her right, "and see to it that crimes requiring indelicate legislation be not tolerated?"

There was a titter all about, but the lady who had spoken merely muttered something about men being so coarse.

"I happen to know," said one of Margaret's companions, "that that woman—her name is Carter, attends all the salacious divorce suits she hears of. The lawyers joke about it. Will spoke of seeing her when the Pratt case was on."

Mrs. Carter's companion sympathized with her and said it was all the result of this morbid physical education which had been introduced into the schools. When she was young, people were glad to remain in ignorance. For her part she hoped this bill would fail. She did not consider it a fit subject for legislation—she—

The chief clerk's strident voice beginning the third reading of the bill drowned her out.

Margaret knew every section of the bill by heart. By the time the clerk arrived at the second section she was unconsciously forming the words with her lips.

Section II—That the payment to any female of moneys or the giving of valuable presents or the payment of rental or bills contracted by any woman not the wife or publicly acknowledged betrothed or blood relative of the man making such payments or presents, shall be unlawful unless for services openly rendered or in payment of merchandise purchased. Section III—That the payment of wages to women shall not be greatly in excess of the commonly accepted value of such services, in the community where the payment takes place, etc., etc.

She finished a half second before the clerk. The president's "What action will the senate take?" found her leaning eagerly forward for the first gun of the battle.

The chairman of the committee to which the bill had

been referred was on his feet promptly. He was a middle-aged, sharp-featured man from Capitol City. Moderate in speech, quick to see a point, and of endless patience, the advocates of the Erb Bill could hardly have their measure in more competent hands. He explained carefully certain specially contested points, told what had been done to amend the original in the interests of harmony and urged the passage of the bill without further amendment.

He had not taken his seat before three opponents were contending for the floor with amendments. The first amendment to gain a hearing was trivial, a mere matter of felicitous wording. The typewritten slips were distributed, its author and one lone adherent supported its claims, then one of the senators from Capitol City got to his feet and riddled it. The amendment was lost.

The next was more serious and was itself amended three times and hotly debated for an hour, before it finally came to a vote and was lost. The opposition was doing exactly what it had set out to do, stirring up feeling and profitless discussion over trifles, in an endeavor to get something by that would cripple if not defeat the bill.

They filibustered until five o'clock when a short recess was asked for by the supporters of the measure.

Margaret went into the corridor for a breath of air. Here, Derrick joined her for an instant with a rueful face.

"We're trying to patch up an agreement so they'll let it go to a vote. But I'm afraid of the man from the third district. He and Mr. Landis are having an exceedingly earnest conversation. He owns a chain of general stores in the southern part of the state. Now, a nice little reduction of the L. and A. products he handles during the coming year, would mean a snug sum on the profit side of the ledger for him. And who shall say he has not a right to make private deals with Mr. Landis even if there is an important measure pending? How would it do for you to go and interrupt? Can't you think of something you've forgotten?"

Margaret looked sober. "If he votes our way they'll

accuse me of buying him with the flour contract for the deaf and dumb school which I think he's going to get whether I favor it or not."

"Well, Mater, you mustn't be thin-skinned if you mix in politics. You are liable to be accused of almost anything, but the public usually finds out, in time, who's straight and who's crooked. By the way did I tell you that two of the peachiest of the demis called Senator Wilson out a little while ago and wept on his neck, while they beseeched him not to deprive them of their only means of livelihood? He informed them that the Civic Employment bureau would undertake to provide for all who wished to work for an honest living. He has a reputation for being soft-hearted, but he also hates to be made conspicuous. He won't hear the last of that little scene for some days I fear."

They were walking slowly toward the senator and Mr. Landis.

"I hate to have to speak to that man," said Margaret with a glance at the well-tailored obesity of the Honorable Bracy. "I feel as if his presence were enough to taint one."

"Feel a good deal that way myself," said Derrick, "but he'll sheer off when he sees us."

Margaret tucked in a stray lock of hair and smilingly accosted the wobbling legislator from the third district once again. He did not welcome her with any undue warmth. Her own greeting to Mr. Landis was as nearly imperceptible as such a civility could well be. Margaret summoned all her wits for a last effort, as Derrick after a casual word, lifted his hat and passed on, to be immediately followed by Mr. Landis.

She took a new tack and told him the circumstances of a little tragedy that had come to her knowledge recently which such a law, as they were striving to pass today, might have prevented. She would have preferred to appeal to his reason rather than his feelings, but if the forces of evil were resorting to sob stuff surely their side would be doing wrong to neglect so important a weapon. Her own eyes were bright with her keen sym-

pathy, and the break in her voice was too real to be charged to acting. Her listener seemed impressed.

"My dear Mrs. DeWitt, you misjudge me entirely if you do not think I am deeply interested in this very worthy effort to cure a world-old evil. As I told you before it is a matter to which I have given my most earnest attention for a number of years. My home town of which I was mayor for several terms had a very enviable record in that respect. I was most firm in my handling of the unfortunate creatures, most firm. I—ah, will you excuse me just an instant? I see a gentleman I must have a word with before the session resumes."

Margaret shook her head when she rejoined Derrick. "He is more wordy and indefinite than he was before. He means to vote against us."

Derrick studied an instant. "There's one more string—excuse me."

He dashed away. She did not see him again until she had returned to the gallery. Then she saw Dr. Bob's big head bent toward him in eager conference. She had not seen her old friend since the evening she had sent for him. Dr. Bob was too busy with his practice to have much time for anything else. He had helped plan their campaign and had put in a word wherever he could, but lobbying was not in his line, he declared. It braced Margaret's waning courage to see him here to-day. No one ever quite despaired in Dr. Bob's presence.

It was evident things had come to a head when the session resumed. The tension in the galleries was so great that scarce a whisper broke the silence when the vote was demanded. On the floor, on the contrary, the senators seemed to have relaxed from the strain of the acrid debate and to be waiting unconcernedly for the roll call.

Margaret saw Dr. Bob and Derrick take out their note books to keep tally. There were probably not more than five doubtful votes. She took a slip of paper from her purse and borrowed a lead pencil from a man behind her. She could see Veda who was seated now with a delegation from the L. and A. in the opposite gallery. She had observed her talking earnestly with the radical senator

who was a foreman in one of the smelters at the North End. His, also, was one of the uncertain votes.

Veda's creamy pallor was wan and her eyes had a weary look. It was only four days since her adventure with Ivan. She had other things on her mind now besides the Erb Act. Her momentary buoyant sense of freedom had passed. Ivan's treachery had wrenched from her whatever fibers of trust and affection had survived his previous bullying. But she knew he would still try to hold her. She knew also at last the influence working on Ivan that made such treachery possible. It was a force that made light of any treachery so it gained its ends, and Veda had known its specious reasoning and its brutal practice too long and too well to doubt any longer what this mysterious movement was to which Ivan had given his whole allegiance. She had just met it again in certain veiled utterances of the radical senator.

"You are Ivan Lapovich's betrothed. I suppose we can count on your aid for our movement. I would like you to come and talk to some of our women at the smelter. This measure of yours will hardly be needed when we get things to going, but I don't mind voting for it, if you are so keen about it. Our people must stick together."

Veda was sorely tempted—one vote might so easily turn the scale. But she would not win even a good cause by trickery. She hated the ruse she had employed to escape from Ivan.

"I have broken my engagement to Ivan," she replied quietly.

The senator stared at her. He thought for the moment he might have mistaken her meaning.

"Why, I—I saw him Monday and he said you were to help him raise the fund and organize the women after this measure was settled. You're some dandy little organizer I hear. Sorry if you've had a tiff with your sweet-heart. Better make it up—a girl always gets the worst of it when she quarrels with a man."

Fortunately, Veda had no chance to reply as they were joined by a delegation of hard-headed business men who were doing a little picketing on behalf of certain real

estate interests which stood to suffer if this world-old business were interfered with by modern aggressive philanthropy.

Now like Margaret, Veda sat and waited scarce daring to hope. She had steadfastly put her own affairs behind her till the crisis of this vote was past. She had written Ivan a brief note to which he had not deigned to reply. She knew precisely what he would do—wait till her first indignation was appeased and try to resume their old relations as if nothing had happened. But the chief clerk had begun to call the roll. He jerked out the names as if he were trying to lift the members by their bootstraps to a sense of their responsibilities. The members responded crisply or languidly according to their degree of interest.

And Dr. Bob and Derrick counted, and Margaret counted, and Veda counted, and scores of others for and against counted, and dozens who didn't care, counted. And the reporters at the press desk in the corner were already thinking out features for articles which should come under some such headings as this according to the paper: "Quixotic Purity Squad Given a Setback!" "Solons Knife Great Reform Measure!" for it looked as if the vote were going against them.

The member from the sixth district who had sworn by everything holy to support it, brazenly voted against it. There was a murmur suspiciously like a hiss as the sound of his voice died. The president rapped loudly and glared at the gallery.

Hope rose again when the radical senator voted "Aye." There was an astonished interchange of glances among the opposition.

Derrick shrugged his shoulders. "The third district turns the trick for or against," he muttered to Dr. Bob.

And the third district voted an apologetic "No!" whereupon Mr. Bracy Landis reached a congratulatory hand toward the voter.

And the measure was lost by one vote and they had wasted weeks of effort and the town would hold a carnival of excess to celebrate the defeat of this attempted en-

croachment on men's liberty to injure themselves and their fellows, when they pleased.

Margaret gathered herself up wearily and went home to hear her husband remark with supercilious emphasis: "I trust you are satisfied with the result of your efforts, my dear. Possibly you will be a little more willing to listen to the suggestion I wish to make, that you should resign from the Board and attend to domestic matters in which your success has been more conspicuous than in public affairs."

But if John Camberwell had no bowels of compassion Derrick had. He telephoned up asking if he might come to dinner and bring Dr. Bob. He did not purpose to have his future father-in-law harry his future mother-in-law when she was down.

John Camberwell both approved and disapproved of Dr. Bob. He found the other man's confident strength restful—delightfully re-assuring in times of illness. He had unlimited faith in his professional skill and his intelligence, but he considered the doctor's views on many sociological questions not only quixotic but subversive of established order. He denounced these views to Margaret with commendable regularity, explaining at considerable length why he was right and Dr. Bob was wrong. And Margaret listened with a penitential patience.

John Camberwell did not welcome either Derrick or Dr. Bob on this particular evening with his usual meticulous cordiality toward a guest. He was deeply incensed at Derrick for encouraging Margaret in her public work. While he did not believe Derrick was aware how overt had been Margaret's rebellion against his own rightful conjugal authority, he felt that he must needs understand how distasteful the whole affair had been to a man of his pronounced conservatism. Further, he was disappointed in Derrick himself. Had the man no refinement of taste?—no delicacy of feeling, that he was willing to have his fiancée and his fiancée's mother mixed up in so scandalous a measure as the Erb Act?

Neither Derrick nor Dr. Bob were at loss to account for a certain chilly quality in Mr. DeWitt's greeting. Dr.

Bob had hung back on receiving Margaret's invitation by way of Derrick. He appreciated the fine kindness of the younger man's suggestion that she would need cheering to-night. Derrick was nicely reticent as to his precise reason for hastening to apply balm for this defeat. Margaret had more than once gone down to defeat in her cherished schemes with no one to comfort. Dr. Bob hung back because he knew John Camberwell's feeling and he held a man should be secure in his own home from outside opposition. On the other hand John Camberwell's home was also indubitably Margaret's home. She had as much a right of sanctuary—of mental breathing room there, as had her husband. Further, he had presumed to advise her to follow her own conscience even as against her husband. It was up to him to stand by, surely, if she needed heartening. And Derrick evidently thought she did.

The unnerving lassitude to which Margaret DeWitt was fast giving herself up when Derrick telephoned, was instantly replaced by a bustling activity of preparation. Her simple homely ministering of laying a fresh cloth, arranging flowers, conjuring up a salad, had already induced a healthier state of mind before her guests arrived. When they came, she greeted them buoyantly, and tactfully steered the conversation away from the matter nearest their hearts for her husband's sake.

John Camberwell agreeably surprised that this was not to be a feast of consolation as he had feared, unbent, and played the host with fine courtesy. Derrick had been keyed up by the day's contest until he was bubbling. He and Dr. Bob vied with each other in cheerful trifling nonsense. It was John Camberwell himself who resurrected the discarded topic. He could not quite resist affirming his own superior judgment.

He began with a deprecatory clearing of the throat.

"I have been telling Mrs. DeWitt," he said gently, "that she could not reasonably have expected any other outcome than to-day's defeat. The American Public sentiment, however liable to be carried away in the lesser or indirect issues, can generally be counted on not to de-

part lightly from established traditions." Mr. DeWitt tossed his gage lightly. His eyes rested upon Dr. Bob's face.

Dr. Bob returned it amicably.

"You are quite right, John, as to the usual trend of public sentiment being conservative. I would go farther and say it is so static as to require mental dynamite ordinarily to budge it. And I was joyfully surprised by the vote to-day to find we had so large a following. I consider to-day's defeat a redoubtable victory. It will attract enormous attention and publicity all over the country. It is practically certain that we shall win out at the next session. We are already planning the new campaign."

"I differ with you entirely," said Mr. DeWitt stiffly.

Margaret's face had lighted at Dr. Bob's confident words. This had not escaped her spouse.

"You have given it a fair trial and you have lost. The opposition will have its forces more thoroughly organized before another legislature convenes."

Margaret took a sip of water. "I was surprised," she said irrelevantly, "at the people who were there in the senate gallery this afternoon. People you would not expect to be interested in such a measure—that notorious Mrs. Torrey for instance—junketing round with a third husband and still receiving alimony from his two divorced predecessors."

"Some enterprising female that," said Derrick helping. "I wonder just how she does it. The other two husbands must be jolly easy to stand the gaff."

"Number one is a miner out in Nevada I happen to know," replied Dr. Bob, "she had a child by him. It has since died, but he probably does not know—the other man bought his freedom by settling a fixed sum upon her. She's a canny female."

"The thing I can't see," pursued Margaret afraid her new topic would not hold out, "is why she was interested in the bill."

"That's easy," said Derrick, "she felt her sex prerogatives were being infringed upon. If an unfeeling legisla-

ture could take away a poor woman's unlawful perquisites, they might go farther and imperil her lawful plunder, alimony."

Margaret glanced up at Derrick in surprise. "I didn't know you felt that way."

"I don't in legitimate cases, but with a predatory female like this it amounts to plunder, doesn't it?"

"Surely! And I am wondering," Margaret leaned forward and mechanically arranged a daffodil in the silver luster bowl while she marshaled her thought. "I have wondered for a long time," she amended, "if a self-respecting woman should accept alimony—when there are no children."

The three men looked at her with acute curiosity.

"More radicalism, my dear?" inquired her husband with a faint sarcasm.

"I suppose so—if you call any departure from existing custom radicalism, of course—it would be." She was groping.

"Yes?" said Dr. Bob intently.

"You see if the woman is—or is capable of becoming, a competent and an independent human being, as I believe she can and will, if our present civilization goes on developing, there is no good reason why the man should be liable for her support after the marriage is dissolved, unless there are children or unless—her health is broken down because of the marriage."

"Suppose," queried Dr. Bob, "the man divorces the woman through no conscious fault of hers after years of married life. Would you then have her cast adrift unprovided for?"

"I like your word conscious, Doc," said Derrick.

"No, because she would probably be incapacitated through her long term of dependence to make her own living. She would be entitled to a pension then because of faithful service—like a school teacher." Margaret smiled a little glimmering smile. She adored to argue with Dr. Bob. He was so fair an opponent.

"You would make it a strictly business proposition

then—no salve for wounded affections or broken hopes?" the doctor persisted.

"Is there any?" The smile faded from her face.

"I stand rebuked, Margaret. But suppose a woman is a devoted wife for say ten or fifteen years and trouble arises. She is still in her prime—perfectly able physically still—wouldn't there be a great hardship in her having to reconstruct all her habits of life—particularly if her husband had accustomed her to a scale of living she could not keep up by her own unaided efforts?"

"Yes, more even than hardship, for her spirit would be broken—she would have lost both the confidence and resilience of youth—especially if there were no children to spur her courage. In such a case I think she should have some provision—anyway—why in that case after ten or fifteen years of partnership, she would be entitled to a division of the joint capital. SEE?" Margaret laughed triumphantly over discovering this unforeseen way out.

John Camberwell was mildly disapproving. "Aren't you talking arrant nonsense, my dear?"

"What about joint capital at the end of five years?" put in Derrick.

"Or two?" added Dr. Bob.

"Suppose," interrupted Mr. DeWitt, "we smoke our cigars in the living room."

## CHAPTER XIV

### DR. BOB DOES SOME THINKING

WITH the Erb Act virtually shelved for the present, Dr. Robert Rutlege had mental leisure to look up other fields of philanthropic effort. Many people dubbed him a crank because he was always pursuing some ideal as single-mindedly as a child and as careless of ridicule or the results to himself as the celebrated Don himself. The doctor grinned amiably at this sobriquet. "Well, a crank usually turns something, doesn't it?" he had retorted.

He was in the act of persuading himself now that a certain mission devolved on him by rights. Minette Doty had lain heavy on the doctor's inner consciousness for weeks. "A middle-aged doctor who hasn't the courage to warn an orphan girl off the rocks when he knows she's headed for them, ought to be horse-whipped!" he groaned. The truth was he had counted on Veda. He was not keen about confidential interviews with factory butterflies. He confessed himself still clumsy with young womanhood of any class unless he had watched it grow up as he had Nellen. He had not puzzled one minute over the cause of Minette's disappearance. The thing he wanted to know was what she had done with herself. He had collected all the data he could from Veda and Hardwick. When Jock had appeared and the plot had thickened, his pity and remorse had grown. But even a Don Quixote could not go to the rescue of a lady in distress if the lady was not to be found. The weeks had slipped by and he had found no opportunity to do anything more useful than reproach himself.

Now, early in April, he was getting ready to attend a medical convention in San Francisco and, incidentally, to treat himself to a long postponed vacation. He was

firmly resolved to employ that vacation in an effort to trace Minette. The morning he left he paid a call.

On his way to a fellow doctor's office the evening before his attention had been attracted to a neatly ornate sign announcing to the world that Madame Marie's hair-dressing and manicuring parlors were located on this floor. The name had gone tearing through his memory seeking for a local habitation. "Madame Marie? What was there familiar about that?" He had puzzled over it all the way up to his friend's office, while he waited, and all the way down in the elevator. Then he recalled in a flash that Madame Marie had once accompanied Minette Doty to his office for some trivial consultation. He had been struck with the sawed-off name at the time and had wondered why Minette had selected this person instead of the matron at the dormitory. He had speculated as to how desirable a friend she might prove to a young and pretty girl. He had even made some inquiries and had been assured that Madame was a mighty white old Irishwoman.

"Madame Marie—perhaps—why not" The doctor's experience with women had led him to believe that few were independent enough to exist wholly without a confidant, especially when they were the possessors of secrets they would much better keep to themselves. The idea burrowed in his inner consciousness until ten-thirty the next day. Then he closed the door on the last patient for two blessed weeks, and set off down town to have his finger nails professionally manicured.

The doctor's nails were exquisitely and anti-septically clean most of the time, but such small items as symmetrical shaping and polishing were omitted. The doctor felt not a little sheepish as he walked into the scented precincts of the manicuring parlor. A bright-eyed damsel, immaculate as to apron and very elaborate as to coiffure, seated him at an empty table and turned him over to the tender mercies of another like herself. Madame Marie was not visible.

Dr. Bob watched the nimble fingers manipulating his own with considerable amusement as he studied how best to approach Madame Marie. He was the only man in the

room at first. Presently a sleek-looking youth ensconced himself familiarly at the table just in front of the one at which he was seated. Presently, also Madame Marie's redundant bulk entered a rear door none too large to admit her ample hips. Her eyes rested first on the sleek youth. She evidently did not regard him with favor. The good lady was not strait-laced, but she had definite ideas of her own as to the eternal fitness of things, and she did not believe any set of human finger nails needed to be manicured six times in one week.

Her manicuring parlors were not without their traditions. She held whether rightly or wrongly that her girls must be above the average of her patrons in morals, and she did the men the honor to count them in as mere human beings in this computation. If the men tempted any of her girls into lapses, she rated the girls soundly and mothered them to the best of her ability. She would not brook her girls tempting the men or accepting money other than the conventional tip. Neither the demi-monde nor the semi-demi-monde had ever held seats behind her manicuring tables, though they not infrequently squeezed in for a "nifty" manicure. Madame's girls were one and all skillful.

She discovered Dr. Bob's presence with acute surprise, and came promptly over to greet him.

After a moment's chaffing, the doctor plunged.

"I'm going out to Frisco to the Medical Association. Any messages for Minette?"

She gave him a swift appraising glance. It confirmed what she already knew of him. Honest purpose seemed to exude from the doctor's pores. His middle aged boyishness so naïvely awkward, conquered confidence apparently without effort. Nevertheless, Madame was a little cautious in her reply.

"I don't know but I may have—just step into my office when Dorothy has finished with you."

Ten minutes later with each generous nail polished to an appalling perfection the doctor walked into a minute cubby hole containing a desk, a small glass show case filled with toilet preparations, and two chairs. The one behind

the desk was large and solidly built, the one for visitors spindlingly elegant and uncomfortable. There was no sufficient reason why Madame's visitors should linger after they had made their purchases.

Dr. Bob eyed the chair she proffered doubtfully for the thirtieth part of a second, then with a comprehending grin assured her he would detain her only for a moment. Madame grinned back and decided to trust him fully. He stayed not one moment but fifteen. When he left she said gratefully: "It'll take a load off my mind if you'll just see that she gets into a good hospital and has somebody to look after her special like. The lass is deservin' of a better lot than she's got ahead, if she did make a slip. There's plenty as hold themselves her betters that's got more for the priest's ear at confession than she, by rights. But she'll weather it, bless her plucky heart. Thanks be folks aren't so down on a young thing as they used to be. It isn't twelve years since there'd been nothing for her but to put the wee thing away or go on the street. But the war opened people's eyes a good bit to the injustice of sending the weak ones to purgatory when they're trying to pull up and be decent. Ye mark my words, the time'll come when the man'll have to pay his full share for that sort of thing. I've lived long enough to see more astonishin' things than that. I'm with you on this Erb business, Doctor, and there's more men sayin' a good word fur it than ye'd think. Don't ye give up heart! It's their own young boys, they're thinkin' of mostly—not the poor women. And I guess they're right. You can't do much for the poor creatures once they've got the habit of that kind of life. They're like the vile men or a drunkard or an opium fiend. It's always been past my time why you quarantine for measles and shut a man up in jail for stealin' \$5, and then let a sight worse diseases and criminals chase the street for victims. You never lock up the man beast who ruins a woman's life 'fur fun.' You give him the right hand of fellowship in your lodges and churches. But times are changin'—you mark my words—times are changin'!" Madame emphasized her last adjuration with a prophetic finger. "You'll get that bill through yet!"

Dr. Bob added "Amen" and smilingly excused himself. He descended the elevator with a lighter heart about Minette than he had known for many a day.

About seven-thirty P. M. three days after his interview with Madame Marie, he found the boarding house on the remote street where Mrs. O'Reilly lodged. When Minette was told that a gentleman wished to see Mrs. O'Reilly, she was sadly startled. Jock? The maid's description "Big and oldish" reassured her. Probably some one Mrs. Hardy had sent. Perhaps a doctor. Mrs. Hardy had said she ought to see one, for her secret was open now for the most careless to read. But her story had been accepted at its face value by most of her companions at Mrs. Hardy's and at the boarding-house, and those who doubted contented themselves with quizzing her or sneering behind her back. She had seen Jock once again as she left the building to go home one evening. But she had dodged back quickly into the shelter of the hallway and he had been none the wiser.

Jenkins, capable as he was, had never discovered her, even when stimulated by additional offers from Jock Landis. Minette kept off the streets and usually wore a heavy veil going to and from her work. Further, Mr. Jenkins was not looking for her in manicure parlors; he was haunting factories and stores and places of amusement. As a matter of fact he no longer expected to find her. He believed she was dead.

Dr. Bob stepped forward to greet Minette as she entered the room. The look of inquiry on her face merged into shrinking surprise. He quickly reassured her. He took her cold hand in both of his and patted it gently, while he gave her Madame Marie's messages.

"Madame thought I could be of service to you," he ended cheerily.

His presence brought a flood of torturing recollections. She burst into hysterical tears. He led her to a chair and waited. Presently, she began to ask questions about Veda, the girls at the plant, Hardwick, Mrs. DeWitt, Helen. Did they know where she was? What had they thought of her?

And he told her of the distress of her friends, and the money that had been spent to trace her, and how Veda blamed herself that Minette had not confided in her. He enveloped her in an atmosphere of friendly concern and tenderness and not one word did he utter of their suspicions. And Minette's tears flowed on, but they were healing at last and wiped out many nights of bitterness.

When her emotion had spent itself, he spoke naturally of her coming maternity and asked if she had made any arrangements with a hospital and if he could be of service. He probed gently as to her resources. She must not be left to wolves. He wanted to know most of all whether she were in communication with Jock. Madame Marie thought not, but did not actually know.

Minette's long weeks of loneliness made the doctor seem like a tower of strength. She poured out all her trouble to him as she had once told her childish woes to her father. And the doctor questioned and soothed and planned for her. Just before he left he ventured to probe her deepest wounds.

Jock had seemed to Hardwick greatly distressed about her. He had reason to believe the boy had made every effort to find her. If he could be brought to see his duty, would she marry him now?

The violence of her outburst alarmed the doctor. Her shamed pride, the agony of the realization that had come to her finally that Jock had always deemed her love something to be paid for in dollars and cents—that he could put her on a level with the prostitutes after she had poured her very soul out as a libation to him! "No! No! No!" She would rather suffer torments than appeal to his tender mercies.

And Dr. Bob sympathizing wholly with her new self-respect, knowing that were he in her place, he could do no other thing and face the world unashamed, yet because he knew that the world aforesaid was not ready to recognize the fine dignity of this attitude—because he knew how rough the going must be along unbroken trails for a woman, pleaded with her to meet Jock half way. He urged her duty to the child. She had no right to deprive it of a

legal name, of an honorable status in the community. Perhaps, and he did not believe this himself, she would be expiating her fault in abasing her pride by appealing to Jock for the child.

Finally, through sheer worrying her, he obtained her reluctant permission to go to Jock and sound him, and if there should seem to be any hope, she promised to see him herself for the child's sake. Dr. Bob went away very much ashamed of himself.

He boarded an early train the next morning to hunt up Jock. As luck would have it he overtook him alone crossing a remote part of the campus on his way to his fraternity house.

The boy had recovered most of his usual aplomb. He had tortured himself about Minette for several weeks. But his youth had rebelled at the suffering, and had begun the inevitable human reaction of exculpating himself by accusing the other. That last six hundred dollars covered a multitude of sins in Jock's eyes. He had never made a better expenditure of money for assuring his own comfort. He had a certain child-like quality even in his yellowness that made him wish to make amends—not because he feared any disagreeable consequences, but simply to have things pleasant all around. As a small boy he had once given a lad he had just thrashed an apple, so he wouldn't cry. He had presented Minette with the money partly for the same reason. Since he had discovered his jealousy was groundless, he tried to persuade himself that this had been his sole reason for giving her such a sum.

He met Dr. Bob cordially not suspecting his mission. Dr. Bob fell into step and answered the usual questions about Capitol City and Mr. Landis Senior, absently. He was painfully aware that his discretion was about to be over-taxed in this task he had set himself. He went to the point promptly.

"I have just come from Minette Doty."

Jock stiffened.

"Where is she?"

"In San Francisco."

"What is she doing?" Jock hated himself for asking

these questions. They seemed to come out without his direct volition.

"Working in a manicure parlor." Dr. Bob was watching every shifting expression of the boy's face, hoping for a cue for his next play.

Jock shut his lips tightly together and kept his eyes on the path ahead of them. His interview with Hardwick had not left him any illusions as to what the better class of men thought of his conduct toward Minette.

The doctor waited a moment still hoping. When no answer came he laid down a trump. "She is expecting to become a mother in June."

Jock knew instantly what he had come for. Dr. Bob had not only laid down a trump, he had exposed his whole hand. Singularly enough the first thing Jock thought of, was Minette nursing the puppy in the park, then he wondered irrelevantly if she had taken the trouble to take the dog with her to San Francisco and if she hadn't, what had become of it. He got back circuitously to the important fact which had been practically a fact in his own mind ever since his interview with Hardwick. The thought of the child aroused no tenderness either for itself or for Minette. Hardwick had kindled in him a sharp remorse intensified by his fear that Minette might have made away with herself. Dr. Bob's statement that she was working, relieved him of the last vestige of this load. He was already unconsciously bracing himself to resist having any other uncomfortable burden thrust upon his conscience. He distinctly remembered the doctor's absurd code with regard to women. He was resolved that the old visionary should not put anything over on him.

They walked the next hundred yards between rows of rustling palms in silence. Each waiting. The hot California sunshine beat down rudely upon Dr. Bob's head. He took off his derby and mopped his brow. Then he braced himself for the task he divined had become herculean. He did his manful best. But he and Jock Landis did not speak the same spiritual tongue. It was as impossible for them to comprehend each other as for an oriental to touch the spirit of John Calvin.

He sketched Minette's history briefly from the time she left Capitol City until his interview with her the night before. He spoke of his providential discovery of her, of her courage, her resolve to stand by and care for the child when so many girls would have tried to rid themselves of the incubus. He explained carefully that she had accepted Jock's gift of money solely for the child's sake—that she had not touched one penny of it—that she had dedicated the ermine cape to the same purpose. The doctor was truly eloquent and he succeeded only in making Minette seem a stranger to Jock.

Her newly developed moral fineness which fired the older man to enthusiasm, left the younger one cold. This courageous, self-sacrificing Minette shaping her own life so independently had nothing in common with the dainty appealing rose-tinted Minette who had nestled inside his fur coat, living but to please him, as he fondly believed. He could have understood her if she had squandered the money on gew gaws to adorn herself for him, and then asked for more. He resented her making mere merchandise of the ermine cape which had clothed her delicate beauty so fittingly that it had become an inalienable part of his memory of their fond hours together. He resented her parting with it so lightly, almost as a betrayal of his affection. Had she no sentiment? He had often heard women were lacking in sentiment. He would have been moved if she had appealed to him for protection—had poured out her fears, her griefs. He would have done anything for her—anything in reason. But if he would not marry the Minette whose warm arms clung to his neck, much less was he willing to sacrifice himself for this young woman who stood so squarely upon her own feet.

Her very fortitude confirmed him in his belief that girls of her class were not capable of the refinements of feeling such, for instance as Winifred Rogers might be expected to experience. They were simply of a different fiber. Before Bob finished his appeal, he was already planning another generous remittance at his father's expense to be entrusted to Dr. Bob for her benefit. It was certainly best that he should not see her again. It would be painful to

both to no purpose. He heaved a sigh of relief that the affair was ending so satisfactorily and he need no longer be haunted by the specter of her young loveliness feeding the fishes or crumbling to untimely dust through his passion.

He explained to the doctor almost patronizingly his benevolent intentions.

Dr. Bob looked at him—at his lithe strength—at his alert face—at the smug contentment of his expression. He looked at him as he would have done had he been guaranteed the bona fide missing link.

"I don't wonder," he muttered half aloud, addressing an ornamental shrub beside the path, "that Minette declined to marry such a cur!"

But Jock was not a cur; he was merely a cub.

When Dr. Bob went back to announce the failure of his mission to Minette—it was not until after he had arranged with the best hospital in the city to care for her, and had pledged a noted obstetrician to take a personal interest in her. She read his failure in his face before he spoke a word.

A shadow of disappointment strained her own features but she drew herself together resolutely.

"I knew it—was—no use. He couldn't think me into his home—I'm a factory girl."

The deep scorn of the doctor's countenance moved her to defense.

"He's—he's not thinking much about life yet—he's just bent on having a good time. He don't realize how it hurts, because he's never been hurt. I guess, maybe, I was that way, too, when we started out together—only I've learned—I've learned!"

Monotonous days and weary sleepless nights had made the girl delve for the meaning of life. She had cringed, whined, pitied herself at first, throbbing with all the bitter pain that a real or fancied injury can generate in the human breast. But work and time were bringing healing. Some glimmerings of the ages old battle of sex, which the novelist likes to hold accountable for many despicable

traits both masculine and feminine, had lighted the way. The gossip of the girls in Mrs. Hardy's manicuring parlors had helped. It was like and yet very unlike the talk that would have been heard in similar establishments before the war. It was more daringly frank, but they were still deliciously feminine, these girls. They spent their wages on clothes and perfume and rouge and considered it good business. They were actuated by the same dual motive that has ever been potent with the undeveloped female—to lure the male and arouse the envy of her sisters. Most of the girls expected to be married sometime but they were in no hurry. They wanted to see the world first, as their brothers usually did. They used their charms to exploit the men, for a good time merely, if they were straight, the hardened, for loans and luxuries. They were not bothering their heads over their fitness to become wives and mothers or as to what capital of capacity and affection they should be able to contribute to the marriage partnership. Many felt confident they could easily learn everything needful when the time came, others expected to wheedle their husbands out of exacting the sordid duties of house-wifery. They were more concerned with filmy lingerie than with linen chests.

Movies and vaudeville and the visible life of the world seemed to instill the wisdom of this course. They saw the alluring female ever in public accompanied by the adoring male opening his pockets for her delectation. Of the less showy, finer-grained, finer-conscienced women who helped their mates to build up the homes of the city, who did their bit in civic life, who made up the larger part of the teaching force of the country, the sisters of a thousand occupations, whose self-respect demanded that love be the reward of love and not the degraded plaything of deceit, they saw but little and knew less.

Minette could not listen long to the coarse chatter about her without realizing that the woman quite as often preyed upon the man as the man upon the woman. Love in most of these lives had become caricatured into passionate self-interest. And Veda's prating came back to her with a new meaning. Love could never be love while it bargained.

The women must learn to give for love's sake—not sell for pleasure or money or a home. And the man? If he could not buy—if the time ever came when he could not buy—how much more of honest manhood there would be in the world? She understood at last why Veda insisted so endlessly on the girls working for all they had. She understood at last that love could only endure where self-respect fostered it. Jock believed he had bought her—with good times—with ermine—with a paltry roll of bills. It had been her privilege to set the price, if she had set it low it was not his concern. Jock had been taught that women could be bought and she had not disproved it. Yes, she had learned the first lesson in the primér, but there was more—how much more, she was but just beginning to divine.

## CHAPTER XV

### A FULL TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

DR. BOB hunted up Minette Doty on the last day of his vacation to assure himself of her continued well being before leaving the city. He saved himself a trip out to her boarding place by waiting for her at closing time in the street entrance to the building which housed Mrs. Hardy's establishment. He stood talking to her for several minutes. Minette's condition, noticeable beneath her loose wrap as the breeze drew its folds about her form, and the doctor's commanding figure, were conspicuous even on a thronged city pavement. They attracted the attention of Mr. Friedrich Mayern who chanced to be passing. His eyes wandered from Dr. Bob to Minette, rested on her face for an instant with a vague sense of something familiar in her appearance, then lighted with an amused gleam of recognition. He walked on slowly a few paces, turned, and came toward them staring hardily.

As he came abreast, Dr. Bob shook Minette's hand heartily, lifted his hat, and departed. Mr. Mayern's gaze followed him till he disappeared into a ferry car at the crossing. Minette was still standing where he left her, apparently too absorbed in her own thoughts to move on. Mr. Mayern took a step forward and accosted her.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, *Miss Smith*."

His gaze swept her enlarged form with deliberate insolence as he emphasized the *Miss*.

Minette looked up in astonishment to recognize her fellow passenger of the train. She bowed coldly without replying and would have passed on but he blocked her path.

"That was a clever little ruse of yours sending me to the Fairmount on a wild goose chase. I have been hoping that chance would be kinder to me than you intended." His prehensile lower lip drew back disagreeably.

Minette had but one thought, to rid herself of him as quickly as possible.

"I did not wish to continue the acquaintance—my car is coming—will you please let me pass?" she said crisply.

"So unkind?—when you can be so kind. Was that the gentleman for whom you shed all those tears and—ahem—spoiled your figure?" His tone and gaze were equally mocking.

"Will you let me pass?" demanded Minette indignantly.

He stepped aside with an exaggerated bow.

"Far be it from me to cause you further distress, I am too deeply grateful to you for leaving me out of this pleasant little family party. Adieu, *Miss Smith*." He laughed and walked away.

Minette fled toward the approaching car with flaming cheeks and eyes filling with tears. It was the first deliberate insult she had experienced. It brought home as nothing else had the ignominy of her position and came near undoing Dr. Bob's beneficent healing.

Dr. Bob had taken the ferry to make a parting call on a Berkeley friend. He sat in the bow watching a white fog drift in from the ocean. The stretch of water looked gray and cold, and the stealing mist was clutching shore and shipping and the group of islands with spectral fingers. He was thinking that life sometimes stole in upon one like the mist blotting out the sunshine—chilling—engulfing. Poor little Minette!

He was interrupted in this unwholesome reverie by a cheery "Hello, Doctor, how's things movin' in Capitol City?"

Dr. Bob took the out-stretched hand but gazed at the man's face rather blankly.

The new comer seemed highly delighted at this. "Don't know me—do you, Doc?" He gave a throaty chuckle which the other recognized.

"Why, Jenkins, what have you been doing to yourself—reducing?"

"That's about the size of it, Doc, done a pretty thorough job, don't you think?"

"Too thorough—no drugs I hope. What was the matter with your old shape?"

"Well that's in the nature of a secret but I don't mind giving you the tip. I was too darn conspicuous."

"Why I always thought your jovial exterior helped your business. Out here promoting glue?"

"To some extent." Jenkins hesitated then with a wary glance about them to make sure no one was within hearing, added: "I've been doing a little business for Mr. Hardwick and it's led to some other matters of a confidential nature. And you see bein' so fat made it little difficult to go about without bein' noticed special like."

"Well, you won't be readily recognizable—even by your old friends, I can assure you of that. I should never have known you but for your laugh."

"Glad you mentioned that—I'll go easy on it. Say, Doc, Mr. Hardwick writes me you're some little detective yourself—found the young lady when I couldn't. Guess I was on the wrong scent. But I'm sure glad she's safe and gettin' along all right—that was a damned low piece of business in that young feller—now wasn't it? Makes you almost sympathize with them bolshevist notions. By the way you don't happen to savey how she comes to know that man Mayern, do you?"

"Mayern? Mayern? Never heard of him. Why do you ask?"

"Well, you see I caught sight of you while you was talking to her. After I got Hardwick's letter last night I thought I'd just have a look at the little lady myself so I was waitin', too. And this Mayern came up just as you left and she didn't look none too pleased to see him and cut him off pretty short but he went away laughin' to kill."

"Mayern, it seems to me I have heard that name some place."

"Like as not, he's a mighty interestin' individual—agitator—real thing. By the way, I'm going to hear him talk to the high brows to-night—like to come along?"

The doctor's face lighted.

"Nothing better—but my train goes at ten. Could I make it back to the Mole?"

"You'd have to leave about nine-thirty—but you'd get most of it. From what I hear it'll be a treat all right. Hearin' much about the Reds in Capitol City?"

Mr. James J. Jenkins counted himself a busy man these days. Mr. Hardwick had lent him temporarily to the government. On the morning after his conversation with Dr. Bob he was to be found at an early hour in a small office on a side street leading off of Market. His appearance was considerably altered due to the addition of a curly black wig and a small black mustache.

There was nothing especially noteworthy about the office or its furnishings. The furniture was shabbily substantial and there were a variety of colored calendars and a map of California on the wall to lend cheer. Nothing in this room indicated what kind of an office it might be. It was one of a suite of three, and the glassed door of the middle room, used as the public entrance, proclaimed to any passerby through the corridor that the Success Filing Cabinet company had an agency here.

This contention was supported inside the office by a sample line of oak and mahogany cabinets. From time to time sales were made of these, but business was seldom rushing though the office force boasted two other men besides Mr. James J. Jenkins, who was attached to it temporarily only, and in a subordinate capacity. The head of the establishment was a sharp-eyed man of fifty odd who wore a United States secret service badge concealed beneath his coat. His private room opening off the main office on the opposite side from Mr. Jenkins' was provided with a small vault containing yet more filing cabinets full of card indexes and other bulkier information. The data stored there would have surprised many citizens of San Francisco and its environs who had not yet discovered how important their goings and comings were considered by the government.

Uncle Sam had desisted from his former course of de-

porting Reds. When absolutely necessary he locked them up. Preferably he let them run, keeping track of their movements. He had learned something about handling revolutionists from the old world.

Mr. Jenkins waited in his office that morning rather impatiently. He had an appointment and his visitor was late. He rose, and going to the window, scanned the pavement below. The throngs of humanity were pouring like multi-colored streams up and down the asphalt channel, swiftly, purposefully, with much eddying of hope, but with little actual accomplishment to show for their hurrying movement. He watched the tide of people with scant interest. People were the media through which Mr. Jenkins functioned. They were consequently something of a bore. Presently his face brightened. He watched a black manikin approach the street entrance—became satisfied of its identity, then hurriedly resumed his seat and a mechanical sorting of papers at his desk. He also flashed a signal to the occupant of the farther office.

He responded to a short knock on the door leading into the corridor by an equally short "Come in!"

The knob turned and the door opened, admitted a man, and was swiftly closed. The man was shabby, under middle life, loose-lipped, bleary-eyed, with nervous fumbling hands. He flung himself into a chair unasked and held out his hand. "Give it to me quick—for God's sake—quick, I'm going crazy!"

Mr. Jenkins unlocked a desk drawer deliberately and took out two pellets from a small box containing perhaps a dozen. The man eyed the box covetously. Mr. Jenkins locked it back in the drawer and restored the key to his pocket. Then he handed the two pellets to the man. "There's a glass over by the faucet," he directed with a wave of his hand.

The man hastily drew himself some water and gulped down both pellets.

"You might better have saved one," said Mr. Jenkins dryly.

"Oh, you'll give me some more when you hear what I've

got for you to-day." The man looked into his face with a leer.

"All right—open up." Jenkins swung round on his pivot chair and scrutinized his visitor.

The man leaned forward after a glance around to be sure both doors were securely closed.

"They're caching the guns over in the hills—I've got a map'll show you the exact spot." He began fumbling in a heterogeneous mass of junk in his coat pocket and finally brought out something in an old envelope. Mr. Jenkins inadvertently held out his hand. The man drew back.

"Not so fast—will you give me the whole box—my news is worth it"

Jenkins hesitated an instant.

"All right—I'll trust you."

The man straightened up a trifle, whether in response to this expression of confidence or because he was already beginning to feel a temporary stimulus from the drug, he probably did not know himself.

He handed over the envelope.

"They've got two thousand Browning machine guns with ammunition and a boat load of bombs and bomb throwers and some old gas shells they dickered for in Belgium. They brought them over in an old hulk that docked night before last—came through the canal and declared a dummy cargo. Nobody knows whether the gas shells are any good or not. They'll probably try them out on the next Labor Day parade. They're sorer and sorer over the Union men holding out. Hate 'em worse than the rest of you now." The man laughed sneeringly. He had more color in his face and seemed more alert.

"Get all this from the usual source?" demanded Jenkins.

"Partly—have to be pretty careful—they don't trust me like they used to—afraid of the stuff making me gabby. I got wind of the boat-load and loafed round till I found out what they had. Of course they moved the stuff at night. Had to sleep down there three nights hand-running."

"Good work!" Jenkins drew out a wallet and handed the man a five. "Get any further line on the companies?"

"They're doin' most of their drillin' by platoons so's they won't be noticed too easy. You know the old warehouse at the end of — wharf. That's one of the places. They take moonlight nights as much as they can to cut out the lights. Well, I guess that's about all, Boss."

Mr. Jenkins was closeted with his chief for a few minutes after the spy departed and a private wire hummed with cipher despatches for the next half hour. Later he received other visitors. The next, a woman, young, defiantly pretty, and cheap, who gave the office some significant lists of names and of newly organized soviets. His last visitor that morning was a man with an imperial mustache and a long lower lip.

Mr. Jenkins had not been disappointed either in the quality of Mr. Mayern's address the preceding evening or in the intelligence of his auditors. Dress, bearing and lineaments had indicated that the one hundred and fifty men and women assembled in the lecture room belonged to the educated class. Mr. Mayern had appeared to be very much at home in such circles. He was faultlessly dressed. Dr. Bob had remarked upon that. The agitator was suavely sure of himself; he inspired confidence.

He had begun with a graceful compliment to the superlative intelligence of his audience. It was more than a coincidence, he affirmed, that in this crisis of world democracy, America was reverting to type in its leadership. Intellectuals had founded this republic, had guided it through more than fifty years of its development, and its spirit of justice and its glory had steadily increased until capital laid its profane hands on the reins of government. The republic of Washington and the Adamases, of Jefferson and Madison, of the greatest of them all, that proletarian intellectual, Abraham Lincoln, had fallen upon evil days under a capitalistic despotism. He need not rehearse the history so familiar to all—how money had bought up judges and juries, corrupted legislators—these were universally conceded facts. The question before all thinking people this evening was how to breathe a new breath of

life into expiring democracy, and the presence before him of so many able men and women gave him just the assurance of speedy success he had long desired. He had not doubted that America would receive the new gospel. How could they fail to follow their great internationalist who had himself appealed from governments to peoples? But he had had anxious nights over the quality of American leadership. Now he saw his way clear. The twentieth century Washingtons and Adamsses and Websters should lead this supreme democracy even as their fore-fathers had led the old.

It would have been a mean-spirited audience that could not warm to such importunities. His audience did warm. Thin-blooded dyspeptics felt a rich tide of red corpuscles flooding their arteries. Men who had sacrificed time and eyesight and health to the service of learning or to scantily paid altruism lifted up their heads like war horses scenting afar the noble conflict where they might come into their own. Even Mr. Jenkins the unimpressible, confided afterwards to Dr. Bob that he could feel a halo growing on his own head soon after Mayern got under way. He said he was powerful glad the agitator hadn't commanded him to sally forth to seize the U. S. mint single-handed for there was no tellin' he might of tried it.

Ivan Lapovich and the hundreds of proletarians so neatly organized into companies in Capitol City would not have recognized their charter of hope in the noble sentiments Mr. Mayern laid before this superior body of gray matter in the class room of a great institution. True he still preached direct action, but it was a sublimated direct action that might safely be admitted into the best society. He said nothing of doing away with the present government. He dwelt rather on the unpaid misery of the world and he handed each individual there a free pass to walk the earth as a prophet, obligingly giving him minute directions as to what he should prophesy. He was not organizing muscle here, he was organizing brains for a far-reaching campaign of propaganda that should drug the conservative element into inaction and induce tolerance for the new system. He was sending out writers,

preachers, teachers to hoodwink the bourgeoisie—the U. X. W.'s mortal enemies—though he was not mentioning the U. X. W. Time enough for that later.

Mr. Jenkins had waited after the address with a number of others, to meet the speaker. Mr. Mayern gave him something that astonishingly resembled a wink when he was introduced. Mr. Jenkins did not seem to notice this but he managed to have a word with him a little apart. The word was: "At the office at eleven to-morrow." Mayern merely nodded.

It was five minutes past eleven when Wilhelm Heinrich Mayern appeared. The other had been fingering the slip in the card catalogue containing that name contemptively for some ten minutes. He was reflecting on the wink bestowed so gratuitously. That wink indicated to him that Mr. Mayern was pleased with himself. Was he merely pleased at the idea of the \$500 he expected to receive at the interview this morning or was he pleased because he believed he was hood-winking a too inquisitive government. He met the gentleman's easy greeting with a benevolent smile.

"The chief will see you himself—third door on the right."

When the door had closed behind the German he stood meditating a moment longer; then, with a puzzled shake of the head, followed him out and departed by means of a taxi for the St. Francis. He had discarded both wig and mustache before the other's arrival. At the hotel he joined two gentlemen who were awaiting him. One, an army officer with a captain's bars, the other, a shrewd, authoritative individual in a well-cut citizen's attire. The three entered a taxi and drove to a large factory on the outskirts of the city.

They had scarcely taken up their post beside the entrance when the noon whistle blew. The men came pouring out of the buildings, a buzzing vigorous swarm. They eyed the three at the entrance curiously. The man in citizen's clothes greeted a number of them by name and nodded to all who took the trouble to notice his presence. He was the manager and a large stock-holder in the plant.

Just as the passing crowd was thickest he said casually in a tone sufficiently loud to reach most of the men, "You see, Doctor, our physical average is high. Not many of the unfit here—no underfeeding. I'll bet, Captain, fully eighty per cent of our force could pass the army physical tests. Pretty good showing, eh?"

The men responded to these statements sotto voce to each other.

"What's the old man up to? Trying to have us measured for khaki?"

"Not on your life, brother!"

"No! We'll have a little red on the next uniform,—not? Johann?"

"Shut up! The pill-slinger is just hatchin' up some new gymnastic stunts for the poor laboring man."

"What do they think we are anyway, paupers?" another snarled with a venomous glance over his shoulder at the group at the gate.

The captain was observing the passing men attentively—you might have said appraisingly. His quick eye seemed to measure each individual in the throng that passed. He made no reply to the manager's remarks. Though once or twice his lips seemed to be moving. No audible sound from them till the last man was through the gate and out of ear shot. Then he drew in his breath sharply and turned to Jenkins.

"I counted a hundred and fifty that I am sure have been drilling lately—about fifty more that have surely drilled sometime. You can tell them every time—set of the shoulders—position of the head—arms—or swing to the walk—used to ordered movement."

"Pretty high percentage," said Jenkins thoughtfully. "How many men did you say were employed here, Connors?"

"Four hundred—thereabouts."

Jenkins dug his toe thoughtfully into the earth. "And they say the government is growing hysterical over the spread of the red peril!" Jenkins' smile assured his companions that here was one man persuaded the crop of fools was not decreasing.

"Oh, the public's hopeless!" returned Connors. "I heard a man argue the other day that this government was so stable that the red hordes of all Europe couldn't overturn it. According to his ideas all that was necessary was to spray the incoming immigrant with patriotism as soon as he arrived, and as soon as it had soaked in enough so he could repeat the Declaration of Independence off by heart, give him the right-hand of fellowship and admit him to all the privileges of this great republic. They make me sick!"

"Amen!" responded Jenkins fervently, "and the sooner several hundred thousands of our citizens spue up a little, the better for the country."

"You think it's well on the way?" asked the Captain lifting his brows.

"I think it's darned close!"

"God! won't it be hell?" Connors hurled his cigar to the ground and stamped it out viciously.

Then the three rode back to the hotel and enjoyed a very good lunch together.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MARGARET AND VEDA

"VEDA wants to see you, Mother." Helen DeWitt came over to her mother's side and, leaning over, rubbed her cheek affectionately against hers. "Dreaming, Mums—lazy lady sitting busily at your writing desk with your hands folded?"

"Dreaming? Perhaps I was—I was wondering if—" Margaret stopped with a little shrug. "Just middle-aged nonsense, dear—just trying to puzzle out the why of things."

Helen laid two cool young hands on her mother's brow and began to massage it gently. "Poor Mummy, you tie your brows into bow knots with streamers because you're so plaguety curious to know why this is a great old world. Now I am more philosophical—"

"You go to a movie and forget it! I know your method. Every generation to its own taste. My mother went to church for her means of grace—I take refuge in philosophy—you drown dull care with new amusements. Eh bien?"

Margaret smiled at her child with tolerant tenderness. Helen's eyes darkened somberly.

"Not quite, the movie is only a symbol, Mother. It's something doing every minute—it's action—the concrete embodiment of 'I should worry' which you once painstakingly cured me of saying. We don't try to drown our cares, Mums, we merely apply an antidote. Now I should say Grandmother wrestled with the Lord for her peace of mind, you with the universe, and little I and my sort, with ourselves. We argue that we are put here to play a part—we don't know why or whether there are any loving cups offered as prizes or not. But we're here and we have to play—willy nilly. So we try to be good sports and down our own morbid and yellow streaks. Hence

when our nerve barometer gets too low—we hie us to a movie or a tennis game or fly right up into the place where heaven used to be, to tone up. Now, isn't that quite as practical as using up your gray matter trying to find out the whyness of the wherefore? Nobody ever has—do you think you are going to, Mother?"

"No, Sweetheart, not with our present handicap, but—I get as much joy out of exercising my brains as you do from straining those blithe young muscles in a tennis contest. Each to his own muttons, Nellen, but I must not keep Veda waiting. She is a busy person, too."

Veda was sitting by one of the French windows with the sunshine pouring over her. But she was not looking at the sunshine; she was staring thoughtfully at a framed photograph of the Mona Lisa hung against a neutral toned wall, and at a magnificent American Beauty rose in a slender Venetian vase on a small table beneath it. So absorbed was she that she was not aware of Mrs. De-Witt's presence.

"Fond of the Mona Lisa, Veda? That is Helen's particular shrine. She says La Gioconda and the American Beauty go together. She and Mr. Martin have a perennial debate over them. Derrick doesn't care for the Mona Lisa type of woman—he says she's too knowing—but loves the beauty rose."

Veda started at the sound of her hostess' voice.

"Yes, good morning—I love the picture—I love it because Leonardo was big enough to paint the whole woman—he was the only one of his time who did. Most of the Italians went to the extremes of painting the spirit without the flesh or the flesh without the spirit—Leonardo put both into his picture and gave her intellect as well."

"Why, Veda, I didn't suppose you knew so much about artists."

"My mother used to take me to the galleries in Moscow when I was a child."

Veda said this matter of factly without further attempt at explanation.

"I see," said Margaret who was beginning to realize that there was a side to Veda she had not seen before. "And

the rose—does it belong with the picture?" Margaret was probing.

"It is beautiful—it is highly developed—but it is artificial—the woman in the picture is not artificial. Mr. Hardwick does not like the American Beauty. He says it is the type of the woman we feminists are trying to create—it is very perfect, but it is not lovable. He prefers a good old fashioned briar rose—thorns and all." Veda showed her strong even white teeth when she laughed.

"I believe most men do. I wonder if it is because the briar is such a fragile, perishable, defenseless blossom—despite the thorns."

"Maybe." Veda's smile changed to wistfulness.

It always hurt Margaret DeWitt to see that look on a girl's face. Veda with her twenty-seven years was no longer a girl, but seated there the sunshine suffusing her delicate whiteness with warm light, and that pathetic droop to her full red lips—she looked young—the maternal had dropped from her.

"Perhaps, it's only because the briar roses are getting scarcer—I don't know any girls at the factory I'd liken to them—most of them are so sort of flaunting—and wanting to trade on their looks for good times—but they're good girls mostly underneath. Most of them would exchange the beaux for a husband and babies any day. Only the trouble is they aren't really fit to marry; they're so used to being extravagant, spending all their money on themselves, and they don't know anything about cooking or taking care of babies—though some of them do learn fast."

"You don't have much luck then persuading them to save their money."

"They save it for a while—till they see something they want badly—then it usually goes. You see they don't look any farther than to getting a husband. They expect him to do the rest—and they have always been used to living from hand to mouth."

"Not even a hope chest?"

"Not often—some who haven't lived in this country so long have little stores of linen. But most of them put

everything on their backs because the men pick out the gayest dressed girls—and the girls want to be picked out. It's natural. And then the more beaux they have, the more important they are among the others."

Margaret sighed. "It is so natural and inevitable, that it is tragic. Of course the men pick the butterflies, and then they feel betrayed after they marry them, if they keep on being butterflies, instead of turning into industrious brown ants."

"Some of them try their best to be ants," said Veda, smiling. "But things come so easy to them before marriage, they can't see why they work so hard and have so little afterwards. And then—" Veda hesitated, "so many of them get the idea that their looks—and wheedling the man are the main things. They see that some of the cheapest most selfish girls are the most successful 'vamps'—and I think they come to believe men don't care much about their characters—and they don't here as they do in the old country—though possibly it was because the parents had so much to do with the marriages there. Americans don't seem to plan much for families when they get married—they just think of themselves."

"And that's why there are so many divorces—the poor young creatures are each expecting the other to give them a good time—and life isn't built that way. So the girls try alimony without the man—or they want to test their luck again, and the man deserts when the family burden galls him. But, Veda, hasn't the physical education the girls have had in the schools helped any?"

Veda was thoughtful—her mind was glancing painfully from the factory girls to her own particular problem—she had come to Mrs. DeWitt this morning for counsel. "Yes, in some ways—in some ways it makes them worse—they get an ignorant exaggerated idea of their own power again—the cheaper kind deliberately try it out with kisses and boast over their presents and invitations. The talk over the Erb Act has done more because we are pounding it in, that it isn't honorable—that it is wicked, to use the beauty God has given them to deliberately *buy*—anything—even good times! Many of the men have a finer ideal of mar-

riage than the girls. Their families are about all the religion some of the working-men have. They are proud of their children and want them to be educated and have everything they haven't had. But, Mrs. DeWitt, may I please—I'm afraid I'm keeping you but—I—I had to talk it over with somebody—I can't seem to see—"

Margaret rose and drawing her chair beside Veda's laid her hand gently on hers. "Tell me, dear, you could not pay me any higher compliment than giving me your confidence."

The girl seemed to relax unconsciously as with a great weariness she had not dared to yield to before. She opened her heart simply as she would bare her breast for a surgeon's knife. The young Russian was completely unself-conscious, Margaret thought.

Veda looked her directly in the eyes, talking in a low almost indifferent tone. She had been betrothed to Ivan—she no longer loved Ivan, but that was not enough in her mind to release her. The thing that made her hesitate was Ivan's determination to dominate her—she could not follow her own conscience if she married him—she would be nothing, and surely the work she had been doing counted. Did not Mrs. DeWitt feel that she had some right to be herself—even if it meant breaking her betrothal vow?

It was not mere reassurance the girl had come to her for, Margaret divined, she wanted to be convinced—she wanted Margaret to argue the case, to make her duty so plain as to banish her own recurrent doubts. And Margaret being Anglo-Saxon and American and rather given to free-thinking, was a little at a loss to know how to go about convincing Veda's Slavic intellect trained in the Oriental catholicism of the Greek church, yet like herself more or less agnostic. She studied for fleeting seconds.

"Veda, just how much does your church mean to you?"

The girl looked up quickly in some surprise.

"Mean—I hardly know—just how? Do you want to know how much I feel bound by my betrothal?"

"Yes—no—I want to know what part your church plays in your life."

Veda hesitated. "I don't know whether I know my-

self. I was trained to believe—everything—but I couldn't when I grew up—still the habit of going to church was part of me—like eating and drinking—and the habit of reverence—you don't have that much in America. The church is necessary to me—only my conscience is more necessary—if the church said one thing and my conscience said another—I must follow my conscience."

"Yet it might be wrong—people often delude themselves." Margaret was trying her out still further. "Think of the religious persecutions where people followed their consciences."

"I do not think people followed their consciences in these—rather they followed the church—they allowed themselves to be made the dupes of fanatical priests—it is not in the human heart to wound or kill for God's sake—that isn't a human instinct—that is always the result of priestcraft."

Margaret smiled approvingly. "Then, Veda, I think you would be flinging God's gift of a fine mind back in His face if you gave it over to Ivan's keeping. With Ivan's temperament—with his traditions, while you might be able to think your own thoughts, your struggles to act on them would be so violent and so incessant against the force of Ivan's will, they would end by breaking you—and you could do him but little real good. And, Veda, Veda, a woman sells her birthright if she marries without love. Don't do it, dear, don't do it! Ivan is not your equal in any way—you can't even respect him. And your children, what of them? Are you going to lie awake nights fearing that their father's weaknesses will live again in them? It is such ecstasy to bear a child to the man you love, Veda—so sorrowfully hard to have to wish your own flesh and blood could be wholly your own—to hate the look in your baby's face that reminds you—Pshaw, dear, I am getting to be a garrulous old woman!" Margaret straightened her shoulders fiercely. Her hands had been clenched, so intent was she on the picture she was painting.

Veda was watching her wonderingly. But Mrs. De-Witt's earnestness had impressed her deeply. It was the

tonic her own will-power needed. She felt she could go on steadfastly now, sure she was not yielding to her own selfishness. But in the midst of her relief she wondered—wondered how a woman like Margaret DeWitt could use the word ecstasy in connection with Mr. DeWitt's formal person or personality. Yet she knew she idolized Helen—she had heard of her deep love for the dead son. It is difficult to puzzle out another's relations. Veda wisely gave it up in this case. But Margaret felt that she had stripped her own soul shamelessly.

Veda lingered in her leave-taking, looking up into her hostess' face wistfully. Finally she asked hesitatingly:

"Mrs. DeWitt, would you—would you mind kissing me? I'm so—so homesick. I miss my mother—" Her lip quivered and her rich voice was unsteady.

Margaret gathered her to her arms with a little catch in her breath she was so amazed and touched.

"Why—why, Veda, you poor girl! Why, child, I love you dearly—no one could help loving you—but I never thought—I didn't know—of course you are—without any one! Come to me as if you were Helen, dear—there—there—"

"I didn't mean to be so silly!—but if I could just feel that somebody—cared—you know when you're all alone you—"

"Yes, dear, I know—you spend yourself so generously for others and you are glad to—but the time comes when you need a little heartening yourself."

She kissed her tenderly on lips and brow.

"God bless you, my other daughter!"

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

**M**INETTE sat under the pepper tree in Niccolo Randi's back yard feather-stitching a tiny dress. She glanced up from her work occasionally to watch the antics of three black-eyed, olive skinned little Randis clad in abbreviated garments of blue denim, who were frolicking in a shallow water tank out by the wind-mill. The little brown arms and legs seemed to be in constant motion and the splash of water mingled pleasantly with the bubbling childish laughter. Sometimes she watched and smiled. Oftener she turned back to her sewing with a sigh.

May had seen the end of her work in the manicure parlors. She could no longer endure the long hours at the tables and she was becoming too conspicuous to be a desirable attendant. The public has fastidious sensibilities which even a kind-hearted employer may not ignore. Mrs. Hardy told her if she chose to come back some months later she would be welcome, but she would do well to stay at home for a time now.

Excellent advice—the only thing lacking being the home. Minette went shopping and fortified herself against the lonely hours ahead with lengths of dimity and nainsook and creamy soft flannel, and skeins of embroidery silk. She slept late the first morning of her enforced vacation. When she woke to find the sun prying into every dingy corner, into every worn spot in the faded rugs, into every disfiguring blemish on the ugly walls and furniture of her room, she was heart-sick. She knew she could never endure two weeks of such cloistering, let alone two months.

She hurriedly dressed and slipped down to the tiny garden at the rear of the house. The two Chinamen who served as cook and general help eyed her hostilely. They

were not desirous of having an alien presence in their kingdom. Nevertheless, she ensconced herself in the shade of the fence as far from the kitchen door and the kitchen odors as might be, and sewed away all morning. There was no shade in the afternoon and she wandered back and forth from her stuffy room to the equally stuffy boarding-house parlor. The odor of pomades and cheap tobacco from many a night's influx of "steadies" clung to the lace curtains and the cheap chintz upholstery of the public room. The phonograph stood open in the corner and records littered every table and half the chairs. Records of popular songs she had listened to at Jock's side not quite five months since. Waltzes that brought back the bliss of his arms. She hated the very sight of the phonograph.

She stood this life exactly three days before fate helped her out. She was down in the kitchen garden once more, when an Italian farmer drove up in an old Ford which had been ingeniously converted into a market truck. Interspersed with his fruits and vegetables were three glowing children, and on the seat beside him, a neat little wife with lustrous Southern eyes.

Minette left her seat and went out to the truck to talk to her. She spoke broken English but seemed pleased to answer her idle queries as to the ages of the children and where she lived.

They were on a farm some twenty miles out from the city. They owned twenty-five acres, she asserted proudly, and had built them a home of five rooms and a sleeping porch. They had an apricot orchard just bearing, and a garden, and an acre of alfalfa for the horse and cow. Oh, they were prospering in this so beautiful America. Some day they would send for her old mother back in Fiesole. It was for this they had built the extra room.

The mention of the extra room made Minette bold. She was longing for the country. Would they not take her in for a week? She would pay them well.

The Italian and his wife consulted together earnestly and agreed. They could not take her to-day. Things were not of a readiness. He would return for her to-morrow after he had sold his load of produce. It might be eve-

ning but the air was very fresh in the evening and the birds sang most sweetly just before the sun went down.

A little thrill of pleasure swept over Minette as if the bird trills were already in her ears. She packed her suitcase that same afternoon and counted the hours and wished the sun would go down that it might be night. And in the morning she wished for noon, and at noon, that it were evening. When the shadows began to lengthen she went to the window like a child at every hum of a motor. Minette was face to face with life and she was afraid, and utterly weary with her own thoughts. The Italian's lean brown face seemed that of a friend when the old Ford finally rattled up and he leaned out at the sound of her voice from the window above.

Niccolo had been trained with due regard for his superiors though he was born in the nebulous beginnings of the twentieth century. He sprang forward to relieve her of her suitcase. Her exquisite fairness and lustrous hair appealed to his Latin love of beauty. Her softly modulated voice and quiet manner proclaimed her entirely a lady to his uncritical perceptions. He and his Tessa were wholly honored that this lovely "Meesus" wished to come to them.

This naïve admiration and respect was balm to Minette. They had scarcely reached the straggling houses of the poor suburbs till she found herself chattering away of her own girlhood and certain picnics she had had in the parks. She drew in deep breaths of the sweet evening air. They passed a wayside acacia tree and she asked him to stop to enjoy it. Gallant Niccolo piled her lap full of the golden fragrant sprays. Minette buried her face in them, crushed them against her body, caressed their velvety softness with tender fingers. It was an unconscious process of purification. She wanted to shut out—to crowd out, all the grime and evil sights and smells of the city. She wanted to forget her loneliness and humiliation, the wounding encounter with Mayern, all the fetid shame and unrest of the last months, and be her old care-free self—if only for a little while.

She had made a brave fight for cheerfulness and self-control even before Dr. Bob had put new heart in her by

his matter of fact acceptance of her situation and his many thoughtful kindnesses. And life had been a shade less desolate after Veda's first letter came immediately following Dr. Bob's return to Capitol City. Veda's letter had been as motherly as the girl herself. She did not exonerate Minette, but she blamed herself for failing her in her hour of temptation. She even offered to come later if Minette needed her. And Margaret DeWitt had written assuring her of her continued friendship and telling her the little tale of Veda's anxiety and sleepless nights. She sent a gift, too, of tiny yellowed garments that had been Helen's. And Minette had touched the exquisite little dresses and caps and shirts as gingerly as if the ghost of soft baby flesh were in them.

These garments came to be the most vivid part of her life. When bitterness gripped her she would take them out and finger them till some subtle healing stole over her. She laid one on her pillow each night. When she tried to pray the far away deity she addressed invariably melted into the tiny haunting presence of the garments. She never quite knew whether it was the baby Helen who had once worn them, or the little new life which was to mold the limp folds into warm hapless curves once again, who companioned her. She had brought this treasure in her suitcase with her to Niccolo's.

Minette believed she had wholly given up hope of Jock's righting her even before Dr. Bob made his appeal. But it is not in the nature of youth to despair except in spasmodic agonies of doubt. In spite of herself she still dreamed vague, very vague dreams of reunion and a little flat a trois. Yet she had learned to appraise Jock at nearly his exact value. She held to his ability and strength which were solid facts. She acknowledged his baseness and forgave it, because he was a rich man's son and had never been taught honor with women. And she longed for him till every nerve was on the rack.

She tried to recall each tender fleeting expression. She tried to remember exactly that fine muscular curve of shoulder to neck and the sturdy set of his head. She tried to reduce these to infantile dimensions and picture them

in terms of babyish wrinkled flesh. Her son, she whispered "our son" sometimes shudderingly to her inmost consciousness, must look like Jock. That surely was his inalienable birthright not to be denied him, as was his father's name, through any fault of hers.

When she arrived at Niccolo's with her arms full of yellow acacia and all her senses soothed with the beauty of the May evening, she felt a peace she had not known since her first meeting with Jock. The world somehow seemed still good.

Tessa came running out with broken words of welcome and the children crowded about eager just to touch the pretty lady. Niccolo ushered her in as proudly as if she had been a duchess and waited to hear her admiring comment on her room, upon which they had expended much work and thought. The furniture was quite new and astonishingly good, being a simple black walnut set. There was a braided rag rug on the floor with Italy's green and red and blue and yellow mysteriously intermingled. Squares of white linen with lace that was Tessa's own handiwork were on the dresser, and white, white towels hung on the rack of the wash stand. Cheese cloth curtains bordered with more crochet, and a lone little rocking-chair completed the equipment of the tiny apartment. A yellow bowl full of blue corn flowers and golden poppies was its sole adorning.

Niccolo did not have to wait long for the approval his ears yearned for. Minette stood still for an instant in the midst of this clean purity. Then she looked up into the friendly waiting eyes. "It's just heavenly! You'll have to drive me away when my week's up." She saw they were pleased but not quite satisfied. So she flitted to the flowers and sniffed them luxuriously and touched the lace, turning to Tessa. "Did you do this beautiful work? And on the curtains, too? You must teach me."

And it was not till she had admired the bed room set and tested the mattress and noted every color in the rag rug and heard how the children had sewed the rags and Tessa herself had dyed the rags—the green had all come from Niccolo's old shirts so worn and faded that it seemed a very

miracle of the Blessed Virgin's that they could ever turn so beautiful a color, that they filed out content.

Even then Niccolo cautioned Tessa about the exact seasoning for the macaroni. "She shall stay three weeks instead of one and that will just pay the balance on the bed room set." But in their hearts Niccolo and Tessa and the olive skinned little ones would have been glad to have her there for sheer joy of her golden hair and "lady ways."

In twenty-four hours Minette felt more at home than she had been anywhere since her mother died. Tessa did not plague her with questions, but she told her little vague tale of trouble with her husband. She had been obliged to repeat it so often she was letter perfect now. And the tears had come into Tessa's lustrous eyes. She put up a special petition that very evening to the Blessed Virgin for her desolate guest.

"It ees hard enough—the first born—when your man ees by to comfort and to rejoice," she said pityingly to Niccolo, then shaking her head, "but all alone, with no mother—it ees most pitiful!"

"She have plenty of money," said Niccolo, musing.

Tessa merely shook her head again.

One week went by, two, three. Minette made herself one of them and finally asked if she might stay until time to go to the hospital. There were taxis to be had in the nearby village if Niccolo and the Ford should be away in the city.

She had been with the family a month on the morning she sat and stitched under the shade of the pepper tree.

Minette preferred the back yard to the little front porch which Tessa had urged her to consider her own, for several reasons. Niccolo's thrift had discovered a new source of revenue. He had built a little fruit and vegetable stand out by the front fence. The cottage was on the main highway to San Francisco and the road was black with motor cars from early morning till late at night. Tessa arranged the fresh-picked fruits and vegetables in tempting heaps interspersed with brakes from a bit of woodland near, or the gay garden flowers which crowded every unoccupied space in the yard. Passers by found the little stand at-

tractive and the young Italians were fast creating a market for their produce at their own door. Niccolo's apricots were particularly fine this year, and these had quite a run of patronage from the college town some miles beyond where Jock was dawdling away his time. Minette had no wish to encounter any of these young people. The very sight of a fraternity pin brought barbed memories. And there was the torturing possibility that Jock might pass that way. So she clung to the seclusion of the back yard and the friendly pepper tree.

The children chattered and quarreled and splashed more and more noisily this morning. She did not hear either the approaching footsteps or the gay voices of a little motor party Tessa was piloting to the apricot orchard beyond the garden.

The young people did not see her at first. Niccolo had set the little rocking chair close by the tree trunk where it was half hidden by the drooping feathery branches. Her loose cotton dress was a soft green that merged readily with the surrounding verdure. Her eyes lifted from her work only to glance at the children until her attention was suddenly arrested by a gleam of color close at hand. She looked up and saw a handsome girl in a rose linen dress followed by another smaller one in blue, and two stalwart college youths in flannels. Her gaze rested on the last man in frightened recognition. He was the first of the party to see her. When their eyes met he stopped still in his tracks as if his progress had been arrested by an actual physical force.

Their gaze held hypnotically till the girl in rose who had reached the water tank called to him possessively.

"Hurry up, Jock, come see these ducky water babies!"

The girl did not look round, but her voice restored to Jock his lost power of motion. He started on without a word, went a few steps, thought better of it and, coming close to Minette, said hastily in a low tone, "I can't see you now, but I'll come back this evening."

He hurried after the others.

Minette slipped into the house. She watched them from

behind the cheese cloth curtains with anguished eyes. God, she had not known it could hurt so—just the mere sight of him! She had no eyes for anyone but him at first. She seemed to be feeding herself greedily with every remembered detail of his debonair youth. Then the girl in rose intruded. Even at a distance one could see how she swayed toward him—how she put out her hand to be helped down from the wind mill platform—how she lifted her face close to his. She was tall and stately and graceful and confident. The others did not count. Minette's eyes wandered from Jock to the girl and from the girl back to Jock, and her fingers dug spasmodically into the nearest substance at hand—Tessa's immaculate curtains. And her lips quivered past all control, but she was dry-eyed.

She had the infinitesimal comfort of seeing his gaze wander back again and again to her empty chair under the pepper tree. She divined that but for the mute witness of the chair, he would have persuaded himself that he had dreamed her presence.

They passed close to her window on their return from the orchard. She shrank back against the window frame. The girl was beautiful and the lovelight she had imagined in her eyes was plainly manifest in her frequent glances at Jock's face. She was evidently puzzled over the abrupt change in his manner. Jock was not troubling himself to return her smiles. His mouth was set doggedly. He scrutinized the window closely as he passed as if he guessed Minette's proximity.

For a brief minute Minette knew a kinship with the girl in rose. She was lavishing herself on Jock and he was returning crumbs—sparser crumbs than he had given her. But the girl was happily protected by her position. He would never despise her. The clutching fingers gripped the curtain tighter.

She wore out the day dry-eyed with twitching nerves. The new life within her responded to her excitement with maddeningly incessant movement. To Minette's morbid suffering, it seemed to be asserting its personality as never before. She had the grotesque fancy that it had recognized

its father and was clamoring for recognition. She had moments of almost hysterical tenderness for it, after which she would droop dejected and inert.

Tessa soon discovered that something was seriously amiss and would have dispatched a neighbor straight way for the doctor, but Minette protested. So Tessa watched her furtively all day and made special dainties for her supper and kept the children from under her feet.

Late in the afternoon Minette roused herself and put on a pale blue lawn which was her prettiest. It had knots of ribbons and tufts of lace, and her arms shone white through its transparency and her hair gleamed pale gold when she looked into the mirror, but there were puffy discolored shadows under her eyes, and the folds of lawn revealed a figure that was a far cry from the lissome slenderness that had captivated Jock. Minette turned away in despair, yet hoped even while she despaired.

It was almost dusk when he came. She had sat on the little porch waiting for him for two hours fearing to have him ask for Miss Doty. He looked haggard and seemed nervous.

"Isn't there some place we can talk without being overheard?" he demanded irritably. Minette intercepted the swift glance he stole at her figure and supplied the words he could not add "or seen."

It shattered her fragile hopes as effectively as a blow from a cudgel.

"There is no need to talk if you don't want to—I have no wish to annoy you. I did not seek you out," she said, icily.

Jock softened. "You've been a real sport, Min-tin. And I want to talk this out, but not quite so publicly."

"Will you come into the garden?"

She led the way without waiting for his assent. Niccolo and Tessa and the children stared in wide-eyed astonishment to see her in company with the young blood who had been there in the morning. For an instant a look of distrust darkened Niccolo's face. Minette saw it. She seemed to see everything tonight.

"This young man is from my old home," she said simply. "He has come to tell me about my friends."

They were satisfied.

She led Jock to a rustic seat Niccolo had built beside a swing for the children. She seated herself heavily, she was most weary. For an instant he stood irresolute. He seemed to be afraid that she was about to trap him into some damaging promise or admission. Finally, he sat down beside her. He stared straight ahead. Minette was mechanically watching a brown caterpillar turn and twist in its efforts to pass some trifling obstruction on the trunk of an apricot tree near them.

Jock started to speak twice before he uttered anything intelligible. Some mysterious force seemed to be gripping his throat. He had to struggle to get those first words out. He meant them to be gracious words.

"I don't want you—to think—I—I'm not damned sorry, old girl—I—I told Dr. Bob I'd pay. But he wouldn't listen, and he didn't reply when I wrote asking for your address."

"Yes, he told me." She was still watching the caterpillar listlessly.

Jock stole a glance at her. She was still and white. He had never seen Minette so still before. The pretty curve where the slender throat melted into the firm little chin was as lovely and familiar as ever. Again he felt that choking pain. He must hurry and get it over and cut away, he said to himself. If you once gave yourself up to a woman she could always make a fool of you.

"It's a shame, Minette, if you'd only told me we could have done something to prevent it. I didn't mean to spoil your life—truly—and I'm willing to pay anything—in reason. I'll make Father—"

Minette had turned and was looking him full in the face. Her gaze drew his. Its peculiar concentration stopped him. She seemed to be dazedly trying to grasp his meaning, her fingers mechanically clasping and unclasping. Then she began speaking, hesitatingly at first, with a little sighing breath.

"You think—it has spoiled my life! And you want to pay? Pay—me—for that? Why, the child is all I have to live for! You think it would have been all right to take my love and—and all I had to give you—and leave me stripped even of my self-respect!" She went on more rapidly, vehemently, as if she too felt she must get this over. "I suppose you thought I could begin all over and deceive some poor working man into marrying me. Your leavings would be good enough for him! I suppose you thought you had condescended in giving me the kind of love you did . . . you did love me . . . I guess a girl knows! Now, you think you can fix it all up with money—you'll pay—pay! You're so rich you think you can pay for heaven with dollars! I don't want any more of your money! I wouldn't have taken what I did—only I was afraid. I thought everybody would turn against me—and I couldn't work—that it might suffer. I wanted it! I didn't love you as you did me—for the—fun of the thing! I loved you till it was agony. And you didn't quite cheat me as you meant to . . . it's your child and it's mine! Praise God it's mine—not that girl's in the rose-colored dress! Pshaw, I'm talking nonsense. You might as well go. I don't want anything from you—I won't take anything from you! I've got friends to stand by me—if anything goes wrong. Good-by, you needn't worry about me!"

She started to get up, but he gripped her shoulders fiercely and held her back.

"You're going to stay and listen and you're going to let me help, do you hear? If it's—my—child," he fairly stuttered over the word, "I've got some rights—I—"

She shook off his hand. "You've got no rights! You gave them up yourself. Dr. Bob offered you the chance to claim your own—and you wanted to buy yourself free with money! You're free, all right—go!"

Again she would have risen and again he held her back.

He didn't know what he wanted, but that intolerable grip on his throat must be eased. He had a feeling that if he left her this way he should suffer to the end of his days. He remembered distinctly the cruel days and nights when

he had believed her under the waters of the bay because of his faithlessness. Jock had not gone far, but he was moving.

He held her and it was a pitiful nearness for both of them. He was trying to draw her closer before he realized it himself. A last wild hope sprang up in the girl. She crept to him and slipped her arm round his neck. In a moment he had clasped her tightly in his arms.

"I do care, Min-tin—I care still—like the devil!"

She lifted her lips to his silently.

The boy tried to think but he could only feel her warm body palpitating against his.

A sudden impulse seized her. She took his hand and guided it till he could feel the vigorous irregular movements beneath the fabric of her garments. "It's him, Jock. Isn't he strong? Oh, Jock, couldn't you marry me for his sake?"

For an instant a strange look of awe stole over his face, then prudence reasserted itself. He drew away and rose hurriedly to his feet.

"It's too late! It wouldn't do you any good, and it would be hell for me."

Minette rose, too. It was growing dark; she could see his face but dimly else she might have lingered; its expression was so agonized and irresolute.

Before he had fairly realized her intention she had sped away in the twilight.

Five weeks later Minette's son was born, a vigorous perfectly formed babe, with Jock's features and sturdy frame, and Minette's blue eyes and golden hair.

The San Francisco doctor kept his word to Dr. Bob. The desolate working girl had the best care the profession could give her, and she needed it. Her fine courage seemed to leave her after her interview with Jock. She settled down to listless waiting with folded hands and unsmiling eyes.

Niccolo and Tessa thought the young man must have brought her bad news of her husband and did their best to rouse her to some interest in life. The kind-hearted

little Italian woman cooked all the dainties she knew to tempt her appetite. And Minette did her best to show her appreciation, but food seemed to choke her. Letters from Capitol City came frequently these last days. She would open them with some show of eagerness, read a little way, and stop. So she came to the hospital weak and wan and uncaring.

Dr. Bliss sent off a telegram to Dr. Bob the moment he saw her.

"If there's a human soul she cares for in Capitol City, send him or her or it by the first train."

Dr. Bob sent Veda.

In the meantime Dr. Bliss and the best nurse on his force settled down for a tussle with exhausted nature. When the nurse heard the story she said softly, "I wonder if we have a right to keep her."

"Right!" roared the doctor, "do you think I'm going to let her kind of pluck perish from off the earth? Besides, I promised Rutlege."

And Minette came through and coming out from under the ether, found Veda bending above her. A faint smile lighted her face. "You? Oh, I'm so—glad."

Her eyelids drooped again. A few moments later she roused enough to ask: "Is it—"

"All right, dear, the finest, handsomest boy you ever saw. Now go to sleep." Veda's voice was very tender. Minette reached out feebly. Veda grasped her hand in both hers.

"I'm so glad you are here—I was so lonely, Veda."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE SHADOW OF COMING EVENTS

“THE American people are the best forgetters in the world,” declared Hardwick oracularly. He was lunching with Martin and Dr. Bob at a down-town café where many business and professional men foregathered daily for the dual purpose of a noonday meal and of finding out what was wrong with their country.

“If you want to find out what everybody and his brother are thinking, go to ‘The Annex,’ ” was a saying among local politicians. There was one round table of elastic dimensions, seating any number from three to twelve, according to the warmth of the discussion, which could always be depended upon for some sort of mental cocktail. Derrick was a charter member of this circle. He had brought Hardwick and the doctor with him today.

They had a topic of special interest on. Bolshevism was rearing its head right there in Capitol City. Even the most careless and optimistic were forced to acknowledge the menace. A consignment of machine guns, shipped to a dummy address, had just been uncovered and confiscated by the police. The U. X. W. were swearing under their breath. But while the police suspected, they had not been able to bring the ownership of the guns home to them, or even to determine where the suspected *them* were domiciled. The good old days when the government found out what it wanted to know by seizing and confiscating literature and correspondence were gone, along with other practices that had proved temporarily useful but had been discarded as inconsistent with democratic principles by the present administration.

Further, confiscation would have availed the government little. The U. X. W. had no headquarters; it was warily homeless. It had no incriminating documents except in

cipher. It held few assemblies save those mysteriously drilled companies. These had grown to twelve in and about Capitol City. They assembled in out of the way places at irregular times. A certain ranch which had a number of large barns had been found very useful by Ivan and other leaders, among whom was the foreman in charge of the place.

The finding of the arms had acted like a fire whistle at midnight on the easy-going citizens of Capitol City.

"It has been only a few years," continued Hardwick, "since we had a hand to hand struggle with Internationalism led by a pre-eminent statesman who aspired to be the whole cheese, and followed by shoals of respected citizens who were willing to soar vicariously on the wings of somebody else's thinking. Now, the proletariat seem to think they can right all wrongs by committing a score or so more. Our people are already forgetting the specters at the feast of the allied victory. We forget the struggle we had in '19 to keep from being made a thank offering of to Europe. We forget the undesirable citizens we deported, the rigid immigration laws we failed to pass. We forget the insidious propaganda that was insinuated into our schools under the guise of peace and world-wide brotherhood. We forget it, and think the danger has been stamped out merely because it is forgotten."

"But," flared up a young college instructor, "we want to instill a love of peace and universal brotherhood!"

"Sure we do," said Derrick, "but we don't want to hand out a serpent with a few white feathers glued to its head, and call it a dove. We don't want internationalism! Every man and woman in this country has had the opportunity to know what Bolshevism did to Russia, yet you find intelligent people to-day trying to canonize Trotsky and Lenine."

"And in '16 the peace lovers would have sat back and let every woman and child in Belgium be murdered while they ate their three meals a day, protected and serene," added Hardwick cynically.

"Because they utterly failed to comprehend either the brutality or the menace of the German attack. Our news-

papers run scare heads about such trivial matters that the public is slow to believe them when they cry 'Wolf!' in sober earnest. That is the trouble now nobody really believes there is any actual danger." Dr. Bob fortified himself with another long cigar.

"The *trouble* is we don't know exactly what and where these forces are working, or to what extent labor sympathizes with the radicals. The anarchist believes in direct action. What we need to know is when he is going to spring it on us. These guns look like *now, pretty soon* to me." Hardwick pushed his hair back impatiently as if he were trying to rid himself of some incubus. He was struggling vainly at the works to make good his promises of increased dividends for the L. and A., and he was fast becoming embittered by the impossible conflict. He recognized at last that the issue was bigger than any detail of housing or any scale of wages however generous—the men were not thinking any longer in terms of wages—they were beginning to deny the right of one man to pay wages to another, the few who were thinking at all. The masses were merely following a will-o'-the-wisp that danced temptingly just out of reach.

"I still believe," said Dr. Bob, "that intelligent labor is loyal at heart. I have enough faith in the public school and the far-reaching scream of the American eagle for that. Labor is intoxicated just now with its own power. It is joyfully feeling its muscle instead of using its brains to see what lies ahead."

"What about that leavening principle of yours that every man should work for his own bread, Doc? Where does that come in?" queried Martin.

"I should say it had fermented a pretty sour mess of dough this time," said the doctor with a smile. "You can't neglect the bread even with good yeast."

"It is a nasty mess, all right!" said Hardwick grimly. "Going my way, Martin?"

"Anything new, Garth?" asked Derrick, after they reached the street.

"I suppose you know they arrested Mayern this morning in New York."

"Yes, got an associated press dispatch. Do you think it will precipitate a crisis? You know who he is, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, our old friend the spy. Who bothers about that nowadays? They say he has been playing double—trying to hood-wink both the government and the U. X. W. Slick cuss, I'll say! His weakness is women. Jenkins says he misinforms the government to get money for his amours. I hope they'll sweat some facts out of him."

"I suppose you want to get evidence to help you spot the radicals at the plant."

"I want to get evidence that will help us get rid of them. We simply don't dare discharge anyone without a reason that can get by the central labor committee. Proved sabotage or membership in the U. X. W. are about the only justification they recognize. Labor is trying to hog everything in sight, but they can't stomach the U. X. W.—that is, the better element can't. Of course the *red* reds are recruited almost entirely from labor but mostly from the ignorant, the worthless, and the crafty who mean to live by their wits. It is a wheel within a wheel."

"To my mind the upper-class internationalism is even more to be feared. The U. X. W. can be dealt with by brute force by a strong government when the crisis comes—but a narrow intellectualism fed up with idealistic theories till it has lost sight of ordinary human passions, can disintegrate a strong government. Then what?"

"The devil and the deep sea," said Hardwick whimsically. "Listen."

They were passing a knot of working men on a corner discussing some subject hotly.

Such little groups were forming more and more frequently on the streets. The police were noticing that they usually centered about one of three men. One of these was Ivan Lapovich. He appeared only in the evenings or Saturday afternoons or Sundays. For Ivan had every reason to keep up a pretense at least of working.

Martin and Hardwick knew better than to stop, but they sauntered, taking as accurate an inventory as possible of

the personnel of the group and catching what they could of the discussion.

"It's an outrage—that's what 'tis! Do you think if them guns had been shipped to the L. and A. the police 'ud a touched 'em? Not on yer life! They'd have smirked and looked t'other way till they got the chance to send 'em round on a dray with the complerments of the force."

The speaker was an ex-working man. His hands were misshapen from former handling of tools but the skin over the knotted knuckles was as white and soft as cold cream could make it. Dressed in one of the flashier styles of hand-me-down suits, shoes carefully polished, linen freshly laundered, hair freshly cut, neck duly shaved, he represented a class daily becoming more common on the streets of every American city. These were American born, frequently of foreign parents, educated in the public schools up to the eighth grade or through the first year of high school. But whatever their degree of education this class had two ideas firmly ingrained by the time they reached manhood. One was to get as much for as little effort as possible, and the other was "to dress like swells," when they walked the streets. They might be plumbers or paper-hangers or clerks or promoters or would be capitalists, or, as in this case, plain agitator, but like the capitalist proper, they never meant to give value received and, unlike the capitalist, they lived for the present only.

The crowd around the agitator was composed mostly of workmen from an unfinished building across the street. They were taking his utterances in a dozen different moods. Hardwick and Martin turned and walked slowly back past the group.

One athletic young carpenter was guying the speaker.

"What do you want of guns, Olson? You shoot off your mouth half-cocked all the time, anyway. 'Sides you might hurt yourself with a gun. Wasn't you one of those conscientious kickers during the war? What do you want to soil them pretty white hands with a gun for? Naughty man!"

Several of the men guffawed appreciatively. Others came promptly to the rescue.

"Oh, let up on the war, can't ye? We done covered them remains with daisies some months since."

"That's what I say, Black, I'm gettin' all-fired tired of havin' this war and the American Legion rammed down our throats myself. I 'low that some of us who stayed at home and worked for Uncle Sam air jest as good as you chaps that done kitchen police out to Camp Kearney."

"That's right. Half them toy soldiers never seed any more fightin' than we did!"

"You bet yer life they didn't, but they're calkilatin' to run this country for the rest of their nateral lives on the strength of the khaki they wore out."

The men were crowding closer and gesticulating. Many of the younger ones were smoking cigarettes. Their elders invariably had a pipe, or a quid from which they expectorated vigorously. The young carpenter had elbowed his way to a point of vantage beside the agitator. He was busily engaged in opening his flannel shirt.

Some of the men thought he was preparing to strip for a fight and edged off. "Keep your clothes on! Can't yer take a joke, man?" The agitator was getting worried. "Here, don't set the police on us with no foolishness! We're just arguing friendly like."

The young carpenter grinned delightedly at the excitement he was causing. Having pulled back the open shirt sufficiently to reveal an ugly jagged scar on his shoulder, he triumphantly displayed it to all who could be induced to look. The knot of spectators was increasing rapidly. When he had their attention properly centered on this display, he said with a chortle: "Thought I'd just show you whether I'd ever done any fighting or not. Got this little souvenir in the Argonne, all right." He stuck out a grimy finger in the direction of the kitchen police brother, "and I didn't get no seven per, and overtime, and bonuses, neither, Johnson, and most of us would have been damned glad to do K. P. or any other little old stunt that had a feed attached. I've gone thirty-six hours on one hunk of bully beef and a canteen full of muddy water."

"Pretty near same here," put in a quiet man on the outer edge, "and I guess if we was good enough to fight

for our country while most of you stayed at home and bought piannys for your wives and lived high, 'tain't so doggoned unreasonable for us to have a little say about running the country."

"I 'low you boys airned it, and then some," said another drily, "but we folks at home didn't live so high's you might think. I ate 'nough corn stuff to fatten a heifer, and no one don't ever fool me thataway again." The last speaker was grizzled and unkempt.

"That's old Brennan," said Hardwick as they walked away, "he lost a son in Flanders. He's a good sort."

They separated on the corner and Derrick went on to the office. His gaze wandered idly along the street. It was a golden day in October and the streets were as thronged and gay as they would have been on circus day a generation before. Derrick was struck with the masses of vivid color in the women's dress and the generally prosperous appearance of the crowd. A shabbily dressed woman was rare. They drifted by clad in velvet and furs or gay-hued cloth and near fur, all modish, all eager, all vigorously striving to keep afloat on the stream of show and pleasure where their neighbors seemed to be sailing so smoothly.

"Where do they get the money?" Derrick speculated.

He repeated the question as his eyes roved along the companion stream of automobiles that swept along between curbs or banked up at the crossings, hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of machines, the greater part of them mere pleasure vehicles. Overhead the whir of the airplane was too frequently heard to be noticeable. He knew that work was plentiful and wages better than at any time since the inevitable slump of the reconstruction period immediately following the war. Yet the crowd was dissatisfied. And the rich were openly searching for something impossible enough, to give some savor to their jaded lives.

"These fool Americans!" he muttered with a sudden recrudescence of his former British intolerance, "to have all this and be willing to fling it away for a pipe dream. Just let Bolshevism get a head start and where will these people be?"

He tried to picture the daintily clad women gaunt and

ragged, as he had seen other women more delicately bred than most of these, gaunt and ragged. He tried to picture a Russian Bolshevik mob pouring down a Capitol City pavement, murdering, looting, violating, as they had murdered and looted and violated in other city streets before. His imagination failed him. But these things had happened and could still happen. Indeed, had they not invariably happened in some degree whenever a nation gave itself up to greed and pleasure as America was unmistakably giving itself up? Ancient Rome in the arena days, and America with its greed . . . but it was not yet a decade since fully two-thirds of the people of this same America had poured out their national and personal treasure like water for patriotism and ideals—had backed this up with their own lives. Was it among these that bolshevism was being recruited? If so, why?"

He propounded the question to the DeWitt family that same evening. They were in the big living room after dinner. Derrick had been helping Helen wash the dishes because the Swedish lady in the kitchen was entitled by law to an eight-hour day. She worked from seven A. M. to twelve M. Went off duty till four-thirty, then worked till seven-thirty. It did well enough ordinarily, but to-night John Camberwell had been late. Olga served the dinner as far as the salad, but repeated taps of the bell brought neither response nor pudding when they were ready for dessert. Helen reconnoitered. Olga had evidently turned off the kitchen and its worries automatically when the clock struck half-past.

Helen went back to the family in a gale clad in the Swede's discarded apron. She cleared the table in Olga's best style, imperturbably deaf to all inquiries. Later she and Derrick made a play of clearing up.

Helen had come home after three months in the east in a most adorable frame of mind. She had washed herself of her cares with the wine of mirth. She had frivoleed with the most frivolous all the time she was gone. Her friend had heaped luxuries and amusements upon her as if their acceptance were a favor to the giver. Helen had a maid, and opera, and orchids. She was as far removed from the

sordid unpleasantnesses of life as unlimited money could place her. Of course she knew life was still turning into tragedy at its old stands, but the dramas did not seem convincing in the midst of such affluence.

If she had stayed a month, the chances are that she would have come home envious and discontented, but she remained long enough to be bored by the type of people to whom providence seems to have intrusted the bulk of its material capital. She stayed away until she longed for Derrick, and her mother's understanding sympathy, and something real to do. She came home so loving and so ready to be loved, that every person she met for the first week after her return, wondered why they had not realized what a marvellously fascinating girl Helen DeWitt was.

And Derrick fed his hungry heart greedily. To-night, he joked and wiped dishes with boyish zest. He delighted to see Helen in this intimate domestic setting. He often helped her Sunday evenings with the little suppers which were as informal as John Camberwell's sense of the fitness of things would permit. John Camberwell was portentously disapproving on this occasion. He had not hesitated to tell Margaret that he considered such fiascos as this entirely unnecessary in a well-ordered household. Of course, when a woman saw fit to give the best part of her time to affairs outside her home, such annoyances were inevitable. The maid could not be expected to be more loyal to her duties than the mistress.

Margaret smiled wearily and picked up her basket of mending. When he had relieved himself sufficiently to settle down to his paper, she looked up from her work and surveyed him critically. His hair and skin both had a dead look. His eyes seemed lifeless. She noticed that his hands shook a little as he held the paper. He had never been young—even in his cradle. Now he seemed not so much old as crumbling. This sort of impalpable graying of the man had been very marked since she had defied him about the appointment.

There had been a subtle stimulus in his petty exercise of authority over an able woman like Margaret that had keyed him up like wine. Never a forceful man, his youthful

prestige had waned as the average fortunes and business of Capitol City grew bigger, and modern radicalism discredited his Victorian ideas. He had wielded but little power among men. He had never been able to exert any great influence over his children. Margaret's usual ready compliance with his desires lent a semblance of cogency to his commands that was manna to his self-respect. Losing this he was in a fair way to become bankrupt of all force.

This was at the bottom of his continued resentment of her position. But for its reaction on himself, he might have become reconciled in time, particularly as her modest salary had eased the financial strain in the family materially. Margaret went over the problem for the hundredth time as she watched him. She did not precisely understand, but her woman's intuition told her that in some mysterious way she had the threads of this man's strength interwoven with her own life. She seemed to have become morally responsible for them both.

Derrick and Helen interrupted her reverie and Derrick asked his question.

"Bolshevism is bred by discontent and the women are the discontented class," asserted John Camberwell didactically.

"But are they?" defended Helen. "Labor is honeycombed with bolshevism, but the wives of laboring men aren't usually so dissatisfied as long as their husbands make good wages. I saw a lot of them while I was doing settlement work. They have their rivalries and heart burnings, but most of the wives don't worry much if *he* brings home a good share of his pay check. It's the men who are the kickers in that class."

"I don't know but you're right—the feminist bee doesn't buzz much among the working women—the privilege of getting out and hustling has been theirs too long," replied Derrick slyly.

Helen rewarded him with a grimace.

"It's hard to see that radicalism is any longer an expression of a real grievance as it once was. There are down-trodden individuals in America, but there is no longer a down-trodden class." Margaret was pondering.

"Then why feminism?" demanded Derrick saucily.

"Because," flashed Helen, "while the woman is no longer a door mat she is still not an equal partner."

"Not bad for a girl," approved Derrick, teasing.

Margaret took up Helen's thought.

"That after all is pretty nearly the bolshevist point of view simmered down. Of course he talks a lot about public ownership and capitalistic government, but what he really wants is to be an equal partner in all the wealth and luxury of the world—to be *somebody* without too great effort on his own part."

The opportunity was too good to miss. Mr. DeWitt as a rule scorned discussions and seldom deigned more than a casual observation.

"The resemblance between the bolshevist and the feminist in this respect is striking also. The feminist also aspires to be somebody regardless of fitness."

Derrick thought this thrust a little too pointed for good taste. Mr. DeWitt would have agreed with him before Margaret's revolt bred bitterness.

"Come now, Daddy, I thought it was only women who got personal when they argued," remonstrated Helen.

Margaret's face flushed faintly. Her husband never seemed able to forget this grievance.

Derrick reverted to his query. "I can't see how people, the majority of whom are as comfortably off as the U. X. W.'s, can nurse enough rage to actually break out in a revolution. Yet I find many who believe we are in for one in the near future. Conditions were ripe for it in Germany and Russia, but America—it beats my time!"

The clang of the door bell added emphasis to his exclamation.

"A telegram for you, Derrick—sent up from the office." Helen handed him the yellow slip. "I hope you don't have to go back."

"Probably do—a newspaper editor is at the mercy of everybody."

He read the message twice, frowning slightly.

"I'm afraid I must go. Come down to the gate with me, Nellen, will you?"

Outside on the porch he turned to her abruptly.

"Nellen, did you run across that man Mayern while you were east?"

Helen started. "No-o."

"No-o-o, why this hesitancy?"

"What makes you ask?"

"Answer my question first, please." Derrick was scrutinizing her face uneasily.

"I had a letter from him. It was addressed here—Mother forwarded it."

"What on earth was he writing to you about?" There was an exasperated note in his voice.

Helen hesitated. She had never told him about the U. X. W. meeting. She had almost forgotten it herself while she was away until Mayern's impertinent letter had recalled it disagreeably. Derrick noted her disturbed expression with pained surprise.

"Helen, this telegram is from Mayern, who has just been arrested in New York as a U. X. W. agitator. He wires that if I don't use my influence to help him get free he'll make things unpleasant for Miss DeWitt. For God's sake what sort of a hold has he got on you?"

Helen's mouth grew suddenly parched.

"He wrote demanding a contribution of a hundred dollars for the U. X. W. work," she evaded.

"You didn't—"

"Of course not, Derrick! I don't have hundreds to scatter round even for a good cause."

"Of all the damned impertinence! Did you answer his letter?"

"No!"

Derrick was baffled.

"How did he know I was interested in you anyway? He was only here a few days—I have never heard of his being back."

"I haven't the slightest idea—unless someone spoke of me as your fiancée. It is no secret, you know." Helen was growing restive under his peremptory questioning. She realized that the time had come for confession, but she did not mean to be ordered about—even by Derrick.

"I simply can't see through it!"

"I can—partly—it really isn't anything much. Come sit down on the steps and I'll tell you."

Derrick seated himself beside her. His wonderment was growing.

Helen sketched the incident hastily without other apology than "I knew you would disapprove, Dirk, so I never bothered you with it. I suppose I was a fool to try it."

He listened stolidly till she came to the kiss. He stirred then and peered into her face in the half light.

"Is that all, Nellen, absolutely all?"

She nodded. In spite of her apparent nonchalance the recital had been most humiliating.

"Did you keep his letter?"

"No, of course not! There wasn't anything in it except he said he applied to me because he remembered my deep interest in the cause. He meant his sarcasm to be threatening, but I wasn't afraid. Why should I be? I thought the worst he could do was to tell Father. But I was pretty sure he was merely hoping to frighten me."

Derrick was gnawing his lip. He studied for several minutes in silence, then rose to his feet.

"Well, I must think it over."

"Are you angry, Derrick?"

"Angry? No, why should I be?—only—I wish you'd told me at the time, Nellen."

"I should have," she said humbly, "but things—weren't hitting it off very well just then—I hated—"

"I understand." He clasped her hands in his with sudden tenderness. "We must not let anything elbow in again, dear. Don't worry about this—there's nothing he can do—really."

For answer she lifted her lips to be kissed.

Helen went back into the house with a sober face. Margaret noticed the change and sighed. John Camberwell noticed it, and was disposed to hold his wife culpable.

"I hope she hasn't been quarreling with Martin again. If I were you I would not be eternally bringing up feminism as a topic of conversation. I don't think Martin

likes it—and you are perfectly aware that it is intensely disagreeable to me.”

Margaret made no response to this querulous speech. Her husband waited a moment then turned back to his paper with a resentful look.

Margaret gathered up her sewing and went laggingly upstairs.

When she had closed the door of her room behind her, she went to the mirror and regarding her own somber face, said: “What’s the use?” She addressed this question impartially to the odds and ends of furniture, which being comfortable but not stylish, had drifted into “Mother’s room.” The handsome mahogany set which had come from her husband’s old home she had insisted should be for his use, when the fretting of the baby at night had so disturbed him that separate bedrooms seemed advisable. Helen’s room she had decked with loving care, but her own bedroom had not been a matter of special concern to anyone. If its incongruity grated on her nerves at times, it also had a grace of tender memories as well as many unhappy ones.

To-night, she saw it with discerning eyes not as a bedroom but as typical of her whole life. It was serviceable, it was unlovely, it was the hodge podge of circumstances, so had her living been. Yet her life had not been more so than that of many other women of her acquaintance. Indeed, she knew of one or two whose lives she believed almost duplicated her own. She had been *serviceable*—that, surely, she could hug to herself as a grain of consolation. But it had been such humble service—so much catering to other people’s mere whims—whims too often aimless and selfish. She had spent hours preparing special dishes for her husband, who had a perfectly normal appetite and healthy stomach, and could have eaten any wholesome dish with a relish. Was this worth while? Had it been worth while to embroider Helen’s little dresses? Helen, who had been a tomboy and cared little for daintiness till she neared womanhood. Margaret had seldom enjoyed such work. She loved rather to use her spare moments musing

with idle hands, but her husband regarded needle work as the mark of the gentlewoman.

After she had begun to think independently the embroidering lapsed. When she began to take an interest in the community life, she spent less time on the special dishes, leaving them to the tender mercies of the maid. But not till she had taken up this work with the Board of Corrections and Charities had she really got down to a systematic division of her time and strength.

And now, when she seemed to herself just beginning to live intelligently, she was confronted by a loss of power on the part of her husband. Was his loss commensurate with her gain, more, or less? Was she actually responsible? Or was it merely the result of a passing irritation on his part? Nervous indigestion? Brooding?

She had read one of the "back to type" stories that day where the woman had begun late in life and achieved all sorts of impossible things, recovering her youthful graces and having honors showered upon her, and incidentally doing much needed and intelligent work along some of the lines Margaret was herself interested in. But her family had gone to the dogs as the direct result of her success, though she did not start her career till they were most of them grown. The lesson of the end of the tale was painstakingly final, the woman would have been happier if she had stuck to the humble drudgery of the home. It had seemed to Margaret that there was a bigger moral question involved than the woman's happiness. According to the premises laid down in the story, the underlying selfishness which had later wrecked her children's and her husband's lives, had all been fostered by her unwise ministering to their individual caprices. These premises were ignored in the conclusion. The value of her work outside the home was also absolutely ignored. The whole equation was solved in terms of happiness, although there seemed to be implied a supplementary proposition that the nth power of any woman's energy and talents was a minus quantity unless entirely used in developing the talents of her family.

Margaret set her lips doggedly. She would not be crowded back to type unless her own conscience and her own judgment convinced her that it was her moral duty. Glancing up, relieved to have come to even a temporary decision, she encountered her own reflection regarding her fiercely from the mirror. Her grim mouth relaxed into a disgusted smile.

"What an old fool I am to take everything so seriously! I am as bad as Veda."

## CHAPTER XIX

### WHY ONE AND ONE MAKE TWO

NELLEN'S hair was unmistakably rumpled—every gleaming coppery strand waved and crinkled and teased and tempted. Derrick thanked God he was weak and looked as if some one had given him a deed to a farm—and farms were going up. It was really a pity they changed the topic of conversation.

She had just told him that she thought Christmas week would be the very nicest time. To be sure Derrick had had his eye on Thanksgiving, but when the girl is on the spot and is fond enough to call your telephone at delightfully unexpected times, and doesn't murmur when an immaculate collar is crushed, why dispute over a matter of weeks? Yes, it seemed a pity to change the topic of conversation that evening. A wood fire was crackling in the grate. John Camberwell was at his club and Margaret off to a board meeting at the Capitol. Derrick stretched his feet to the blaze and settled down in utter content.

"It is good just to be alive to-night—an open fire always seems to draw people closer—let's have one in every room, dear. May I smoke?"

"Course, silly, you don't have to ask—here!"

Helen deftly extracted his case from his coat pocket and taking out a cigarette, lighted it for him.

"There, my lord, like a foot-stool or—anything?" roguishly.

Derrick's answering look was good to see. He puffed away in silence. He was content with the world. Mayern's wire had been mere bluff apparently. He had no serious worries.

Helen sat still also for several minutes watching the fire. It was unusual for her to be so quiet. Derrick looked round inquiringly.

"A penny for your thoughts, Nell-o'-my-heart."

"You mightn't like 'em."

"Try me."

"I was thinking that." Nellen helped herself to Derrick's handkerchief. There was more room for knots in it than in her own, and she was fond of punctuating her conversation with knots. Like her mother she hated the ordinary woman's handicrafts. They made her nervous. But she seldom kept her restless fingers still.

"The reason I don't mind your not being a feminist, Derrick dear, is that you are one," she stated succinctly.

"Precisely," he rejoined with an indulgent grin, "what's the moral?"

"The moral is contained in your smile—it is abominably patronizing."

Derrick got the best side view he could from his reflection in the tiling above the grate and drew down his countenance discreetly. "Anything you say goes, Nellen, but what are you driving at? Want me to take a course in facial expression?"

"Uh-unh! You express too much now." She tied two more knots while she ordered her thoughts.

Derrick filled in the gap. "I'm a feminist in so far as wanting the woman to have everything she can get away with, goes—and that's about as far as is practical, I guess."

"You mean you're willing for her to have anything she's strong enough to hold on to?"

"That's about the idea."

"Well, it's a poor sort of an idea—most men couldn't hold half they lay hands on, if they didn't have the government and public opinion to back them."

Derrick's eyes brightened with appreciation of her keenness. That was one of the joys of Helen—you didn't have to talk down to her.

"It's not quite that—I mean all the liberty and opportunity she can use without losing the gifts she already has. What's the use of giving a child three oranges if its hands will only hold two?"

It was not a happy simile.

"No, but if you gave it a choice between two oranges

and one orange and one apple, it might be glad to give up one orange for the sake of the apple—maybe it'd agree with its little tummy better."

She looked up waggishly. She doted on a contest of wits with him. Derrick was wonderfully sane but he thought better with his pen than his tongue. He was more British than Irish in this.

He caught her restless hands in his. "What's the apple you're hankering after?"

"You've given me pretty big bites of it—course being a man you're just a little afraid to let me eat to the core for fear I might choke on the seeds—but back east I got so starved for it that all the oranges I could hold didn't seem worth one knotty Rhode Island Greening. Oh, Derrick, those men used to make me feel half-witted. They didn't seem to think I could be interested in anything but myself or themselves. They didn't feed me anything half so wholesome as oranges—just sugar—sugar—sugar. Course I like flattery and to flirt, and admiration, and clothes, and good times—who wouldn't? But the way they patronized my intellect made me sore. And the way some of those young college chaps talked down to older women who had three times the knowledge of affairs, not to mention brains, that they had, was nauseating. And the women, from the sub-débutantes up, deliberately catered to this idea. I heard a woman who is a recognized authority in her line deliberately draw out one of your cynical superior men till he made an ass of himself. He had never taken sufficient interest in the subject to know that she was doing special research work for the government—so he instructed her! Gee, how he instructed her! And I heard him afterwards saying she was really a charming woman—pity she hadn't succeeded in catching a husband. A woman might remove mountains and the average man would reserve his approbation till he found out whether she was married. And her life would be considered a failure if she wasn't."

"Not guilty—what more?"

"I know you're not—of anything so raw as that—but—"

"My shoulders are squared—go to it!" He smiled at her once more, this time a little anxiously. He was very loath to have any difference come between them again.

Helen looked at him wistfully, then meeting his loving eyes looked away into the coals. She seemed to be hunting words in their fiery depths.

"When I was a girl—in high school," she went on almost hesitatingly, "I found out a girl had to—sort of extinguish her mind so the boys would shine, if she wanted to be popular. She could use her cleverness to make herself fascinating or to say smarty things, but she wasn't expected to be a leader—at least they didn't want to follow if she was."

Nellen still seemed to be looking for words.

"And I set up a little ideal—it was to be a man who would fight things out with me on an equality—to the bitter end. I wanted him to win out in the end—at least in the big things. But I wanted him to win after I had pitted all my strength against his—I didn't want to have to give in to hold his affection or pretend—about anything. I wanted to be able to show him the ugliest there was in me as well as the best and have him still love me. And it wasn't to be enough that he was physically stronger than me—I wanted him to be mentally stronger, morally stronger—strong enough never to beg the question on the ground that he is a man—as most men do."

She looked up at him with luminous questioning eyes and he, poor devil, thought he knew at last where he had failed and wondered how many men could stand that sort of a test unless they deliberately picked out their inferiors for wives. Many men did just that—was this the reason?

He became aware that Helen was expecting a response.

"Isn't that a pretty large order, Nellen, for a mere man?"

"If it is—there's something wrong with the marriage. Men think a woman ought to look up to them just because they're men. But—she can't—at least not for long. But if the man is really her mate, he will be her equal or stronger. And she will look up to him, not because he is a

man, but for the same reason men and women admire and revere strong individuals of their own sex."

"What about this maternal instinct in woman that loves to bind up wounds and cover up man's weaknesses?"

"It's intended for children and the waifs of society. The moment you have to begin apologizing for your man, he becomes your child not your husband. The same way with men. Heaps of men never have wives—they just run institutions for the feeble-minded."

Derrick laughed but there was no mirth in the laugh.

Helen waited. She had shown her hand daringly; she wanted him to lay down his.

Derrick considered that he had long since laid down his hand—why expose its pitiful weakness further? It was for her to say whether the game was snappy enough to hold her. He wasn't exactly caring for the game. He wanted his home, and a wife, and a not too exacting tenderness.

Helen waited a little longer and then nestled over to him and looked up into his face with a sudden sinking of the heart.

He did not respond. Finally, seeing that she felt what she had said demanded an answer, he said evenly: "Sorry I can't qualify—I'd like to be a giant for your sake, but—"

"Derrick Martin, what are you talking about? You don't think—I was hinting that—the idea! Goosie, do you suppose I'd ever promised to marry you if you hadn't measured up—in every single way? Why, your muscle always makes me mad." She gave a vicious little tap on the bicep nearest her. "You're only a tiny bit taller than I am, but—why you are twice as strong! It's only, Dirk, that you won't take the trouble to use your strength—it's your mind I'm talking about now. When we seriously disagree, you'll hardly ever have it out fair and square as you would with a man you cared for, you want to kiss me and make me forget all about our difference that way. And don't you see that never really clears the slate? And after we're married I should hate it, if you acted that way."

He turned toward her eagerly, gripping her hands and

searching her face. "Is that what was the trouble all those months, Nellen?"

She did not try to evade. "No," she said soberly, "it wasn't."

"Then in God's name, what was it, dear? You say you want to meet every problem fairly and squarely as men meet them, yet you closed half your heart to me for days and weeks at a time. And you never gave me a word of explanation. I'm willing to stand up and fight and take my punishment if I must, but punching shadows isn't in my line. I wouldn't have brought this up to-night, but you've thrown down the gauntlet yourself. Now, stick to your principles, for I pick it up! Let's have this thing out right here and now. If I'm too small fry for you, say so—I'll not drive!"

Helen had said truly that his muscles were like steel. He was gripping her wrists mercilessly, absolutely unaware that he was hurting her.

She did not complain. She would have given the world to have it out, but her sense of loyalty would not let her confess that since her father had disappointed her girlish faith, she had morbidly feared her husband would, also.

"Dirk, it isn't that—not what you think, at all—it's something that hasn't anything to do with you, really, only—I just got morbid, that's all. It—the feeling's all gone now since I've been away."

He considered this a moment.

"To hell with conventions, Helen, just what was it? Thought there was a bit too much of the animal in me, did you? Whatever it was, tell me, and let's wipe the slate clean."

Helen groaned. "But, I can't, Dirk, it isn't just us—I can't tell you. It isn't you at all—it's me." She thought this was a happy inspiration to divert him. He was guessing so perilously close to her secret.

But it came to Derrick with a sinister meaning. Had Helen something in her past? Could Mayern? He set his jaw stubbornly—he would know what she was talking about. If it was big enough to darken their lives, it was possible to put it into words and dispose of it.

"Helen, if you won't tell me, can't you tell your mother and let her tell me? I won't have this intangible something hanging over us. I'd rather give you up."

"Mother! Oh, no!" A frightened look crept into the girl's eyes.

It was Derrick's turn to groan. Everything seemed to be whirling round him. He was suffering a worse torment than any Dante depicted—that of suspecting the woman he loved.

He dropped her hands and got to his feet. "I'm a fool, Nellen—guess I'm not quite in the pink tonight. Got some work to do yet at the office—think I'd better get it over and turn in. You'll not mind—I don't seem up to this sort of talk to-night."

His face was white and there was a strained look about his mouth as if he were in physical pain. Helen was instantly alarmed and contrite.

"Dirk, why didn't you tell me? I wouldn't have bothered you with anything so strenuous. Are you suffering? Can't I get something for you?"

"It's not so bad as that, Helen." He distorted his lips into a clumsy smile. "Besides, you said coddling was for children and waifs—I'll try to stay in the man class myself." He could not keep his pain from turning into bitterness.

Helen started as if she had been stung. Why was he willfully misinterpreting her words?

"As you like. But you know I did not mean that! Oh, Derrick, don't let's get to misunderstanding each other again!" She put her hands on his shoulders and searched his face anxiously.

He could not endure her nearness. Gently putting her hands aside, he moved back. "You'll have to excuse me, Nellen. Good night."

And he was gone.

Helen DeWitt stood where he had left her, dazed. He was not sick—but she had hurt him terribly. That was her first thought. She dropped down in a heap on the davenport before the fire. What could she have said? She tried to go over their whole conversation word for

word. He had not seemed responsive from the beginning, she remembered. Perhaps, after all he had been sick and was hiding it from her. Still, he had been almost boyishly radiant for the first fifteen minutes. No, it must have been something she had said. Why was she always spoiling things? She was a perfect fool—that's what she was! Men hated that line of talk and she knew they did, yet she had obstinately persisted. Helen fairly loathed herself for the next two hours. A step on the walk outside sent her skurrying to bed. She did not want to see either her father or mother.

She tossed and tumbled in deep abasement for several hours, dropping off finally into a troubled sleep. In the morning a headache punished her further for the mistakes of the evening. All morning she hoped for a word from Derrick. She jumped with such alacrity whenever the telephone rang that her mother noticed it. "Expecting something, Nellen?"

She hastily denied.

By noon her punished pride began to revive. After all, the girl had some rights in love. If she couldn't ever bring up the things that troubled her—if she must always be studying to please the man—what good were love and marriage anyhow? The old serpent crept back into good society once more. Last night wouldn't have counted if there hadn't been all those previous misunderstandings. And there wouldn't have been any previous misunderstandings but for her father. By the time John Camberwell came home in the evening his daughter wasn't on speaking terms with him in her heart.

He was not observant of other people's moods but he detected a coolness and set it down to Margaret's failures in her up-bringing.

When nine o'clock came and still no message from Derrick, Helen could not endure the strain longer. She called up *The Republican* and asked for Mr. Martin. A bass voice informed her shortly that Mr. Martin was out of town on business and promptly rang off.

Helen digested this fact. He wasn't sick then—and he had deliberately gone away from town without a word.

Helen arraigned Derrick mercilessly during the next hour. She no longer tried to excuse him by making her father the scape-goat.

After she had tried him with the evidence at hand she thirsted for more facts. She called up the office again and demanded of the surly gentleman how long Mr. Martin expected to be gone. "Three days anyhow." He did not vouchsafe any further data. When he hung up the receiver he observed casually, "Same woman that called awhile ago—sounded like Martin's red-headed lady—wonder what's up."

Helen was angry as she had never been with Derrick before. She was humiliated, enraged, hurt, and it was difficult to tell which emotion was uppermost. She no longer blamed herself. She had sincerely tried to come to an understanding with him. And if he did not care for her as she really was, she certainly would not pretend to be something she was not to hold his affection. He had been all right so long as they just kissed and cooed. If that was all he wanted with a girl, he could go somewhere else to get it. She was perfectly willing to own that she wanted that, too. But she wanted a deal more to satisfy her for life. "And a man who couldn't even listen to what troubled her—if he disagreed with it—Well, he wasn't the one for her—that was gospel."

Helen considered this decision final and baptized it with many tears to make it sacred. By the next day she loved Derrick torturingly. She had always felt so safe about his feelings before—he had been infinitely patient with all her restless whims.

On the third day the postman brought her a letter in the familiar hand. She fled with it to her room and cried over it before she opened it. It did not read like the Derrick she knew, the wording was strange, even the writing was jerkily unlike Dirk's easy smooth penmanship. It stated very briefly that he was sorry to have grouched—to have left her so abruptly and to have gone away without notifying her, but their conversation had touched him pretty deep. He had wanted time to think things over calmly. Now, he realized fully that he was not the man

for her and that he had done wrong to try to hold her so long. He released her from their engagement. He should always be her friend—should always think of her most tenderly, but this was good-by.

It came to Helen as a slap in the face. She did not waste time thinking it over. She tore off her ring in a fury, tied it up hastily, and rushing down to the nearest branch post office, registered it to his address. Then she went home and told her mother, without vouchsafing other explanation than that they had quarreled and Derrick himself had broken the engagement.

Margaret felt as if she had lost another son.

Derrick, returning to Capitol City on the same train as his letter, received the packet in the afternoon mail and hunted hungrily for a message. He watched the mail for a week hoping for some word. When none came he accepted the break as final, settling down with jumping nerves to a gray monotony of existence, which any chance glimpse or news of Helen turned into diabolical torture.

He was far from satisfied with himself. He had done his heroic best to reason the whole matter out coolly. His suddenly awakened suspicion of Helen had fitted in too perfectly with all her unexplained caprice, with her concealing that contretemps with Mayern—he had ground his teeth over that—to be lightly dismissed. It had been so unlike her not to tell him at the time—she was usually so frank—yet he should never have learned of it but for the scoundrel's telegram. Along with his terrible doubt was the conflicting line of thought that she had found him wanting. Derrick was sensitively aware of his own deficiencies. He had raged at his lack of inches more than once as he measured himself beside Helen's tall lissomeness. How could he hope to hold her?

He had lived through hell the night he parted from her, then had arranged for a temporary absence from the newspaper and fled out of town like a hunted thing, carrying his torments with him.

One minute he would persuade himself that Helen had committed some girlish imprudence which she had mor-

bidly magnified into a reason why she should not marry—he had sense enough at intervals to remember that their troubles began before he heard of Mayern—the next, the world went black while he pictured her caught in some trap by “that beast.” That might not have been their first encounter—how was he to know? “God!—what a rotter he was himself to be thinking such thoughts!” He reverted to his own unworthiness.

“The matter was plain enough. He was simply not a big enough fish for her—back among those millionaires she had realized the truth. She must have felt this vaguely all along. That accounted for her fits of coldness. Pshaw, it was so clear any child should have seen it, but he had had to be kicked out.” Nice comforting thoughts these for a man to take his pick of.

He did not succeed in holding to any one theory long, but he reached the same conclusion from each set of premises, he had done the wise thing in releasing her. Her returning his ring without a word, he accepted as evidence that she was glad to be released. He could always persuade himself that he had done the honorable thing except when his *worst* fear assailed him. Suppose Helen had been trapped or unworthy, had he any moral right to give her up? Would not a real man have insisted on marrying her? She had not discarded him for his past. She had accepted it with generous tolerance.

He tried to think this out to its ultimate conclusions one night in his office in the small hours when every sound reverberated with ghostly echoes in the emptiness. What was the essential difference in such a lapse in the man and the woman? He was absolutely convinced that Helen was pure-minded. If she had been carried away in a moment of weakness—that man was the cleverest devil on the face of the earth! Or if she had been—forced—and afraid—to confess it—what then?

The veins in his forehead stood out dark and swollen.

Had he any valid reason for not making her his wife? If she had been the widow or even the divorced wife of such a man as the German even, he would not have hesitated as he was hesitating now. Why was it? Marriage

with him would have debauched her spirit and polluted her body just as much. It wasn't a question of virginity—it wasn't a question of spiritual loss or of loyalty—what was it? Was it the male instinct of absolute possession, or the thrall of centuries of conventional training? The Latin, while he would be inordinately jealous—might avenge—had no such horror of a slip on the woman's part. His mind wandered to Minette. Surely she was as fit to be a wife as the average of her companions in the L. and A. She was more likely to be finely loyal because of her own suffering. Then why this repugnance? Had the man the right to set artificial standards by which to judge the woman? Immorality was either a sin or it was not a sin; sex could not make any difference in the moral quality of the act. "It couldn't—but it did! God! what had he done to have this thing come on him!"

Daybreak found him sitting there in pallid misery reproaching himself.

He was subconsciously on his knees to Helen for the next week. Then he passed her on the street when she was flirting radiantly with a young eastern millionaire who had followed her to Capitol City. Derrick throttled remorse and distrust alike in a mad fit of jealousy. No one need waste sympathy on Helen De Witt. Nature had competently fashioned her to take care of herself.

A few weeks later her engagement to the eastern man was announced.

## CHAPTER XX

DR. BOB MEDDLES YET AGAIN

MARGARET DEWITT sat in the electric in front of the Arrow department store talking to Veda. She had been shopping with Helen and the crowd tired her.

"I love pretty things but this eternal fluff of perishable stuff that won't even stand one washing, sickens me. Helen is finishing up the odds and ends by herself while I juggle my temper into a state of meekness fit to tackle the dressmaker."

It was a Saturday morning near Christmas. Veda had found her sitting alone in the machine beside the curb and Margaret had invited her inside for a visit. She had seen but little of Veda since the latter's confidence—or indeed since the Erb Act campaign had ended in defeat.

Margaret had the feeling these days that everything she attempted ended in defeat. She was sick at heart over Helen's break with Derrick, and far from pleased with her new love affair. She could not talk these intimate perplexities over with Veda, but she was easing the pain of her real troubles by venting her irritation on petty annoyances. When she complained of the useless elegances, the economic waste merely typified the spiritual waste that was eating into her soul. She could not bring herself to deck Helen for this ill-considered bridal.

Were all her sacrifices for the child for such an end? She had seen the man and appraised him. Debonair, careless, care-free, and meaning to stay care-free, Herbert Maldon was helping himself to Helen's beauty as carelessly as he would select a new car. What he wanted he went after—and usually got, because he had wealth and position in dazzling measure. But the Helen she loved, he would never know. The child's buoyant loveliness—

the fineness—the sense of honor—the fearless frankness. The man was not big enough himself to appreciate these. Derrick knew the Helen she knew; this man had wooed a showier, more conventional, harder Helen. And the probabilities were that her cherished daughter would grow into a semblance of what her husband wanted and expected of her. Women ordinarily did just this. Only the very strongest were able to keep their souls wholly aloof. It seemed more than Margaret could bear.

Her own marriage had been such an unending misfit. And now Helen! Helen who had not even her Spartan training to fortify her. She had been so petted—the rough places had been made as smooth for her dainty feet as Margaret's tender foresight could contrive. She had watched over her religiously. It had been a maxim of hers that her children should not fail of opportunity through lack of any self-sacrifice or neglect on her part. She told herself she could not face life if she failed here.

So Margaret railed on to Veda about the difficulties and exasperations of trousseaux until Veda marveled that the Mrs. DeWitt, whom she had always found so sympathetic, so tenderly mindful of others, should be mired in such trivialities.

Veda did not care for fluff herself, but to go and buy beautiful and suitable things easily, seemed very pleasant. She supposed from what she heard, that Helen DeWitt was marrying into a very enviable style of living. Not that luxury made any great appeal to Veda. But she felt it would have made an appeal to her, if she had been able to blot out those months of death and terror which had sobered her. And one appurtenance of wealth still lured and the lack of it rankled. She did not mind being a working girl, but the pervading disrespect that enveloped the working girl on every hand, stung her.

The working man had at last wrested from society a certain dignity. He was a force to be reckoned with economically and politically. But the working girl, no matter what her character or beauty or achievement, was regarded as several degrees beneath the silliest, most selfish, inconsequential society girl, by the average man of any

class. Ivan would have been inordinately flattered by any notice from a girl in the stratum above him. He would never be anything but patronizing to a woman of his own class. The finest men usually had a suaver politeness for the daughters of the rich, Veda believed. She had been brought up in the atmosphere of respect that old world servants were wont to accord their employers' families. She missed this deference more than any good thing of her past.

Dr. Bob swinging up the street at a good pace sighted the pair in the electric and broke in upon Margaret's ramblings and Veda's musings with his usual hearty greetings. Planting one foot on the step of the brougham, he beamed in on them with such delight at this happy encounter, that all their megrims faded into insignificance.

"What are you two plotting now? Going to disturb the Honorable Bracy's peace of mind some more? Mean trick and him all unsuspecting off in California."

"I only wish we could," said Margaret. "But we shall have to wait another year, I fear, and with a new legislature most of the work will need to be done over again."

"Not this time, praised be. I've just run across Tommy Gregg and he gave me a tip with the injunction to pass it on quietly to you two. And behold, one hour later I chance upon you. Who says there isn't a meddling special providence? I never did believe any normal deity could resist busting into human affairs now and then. My fingers are always itching to stack the cards. And to be able to, and refrain—why, even deity should be permitted a benevolent bat now and then."

"Bob, you sinner, Veda will think you've been on a bat yourself," remonstrated Margaret, laughing.

"I have—the very best kind, a debauch of hope! Gregg says he will have to call a special session the first of the year—and that spells another opportunity for the bill. So we'll have to get busy. How are Helen and John, Margaret?"

The joy of his news faded from Margaret's face.

"Both well and busy, thank you."

Before the doctor could reply Helen came up to tell her

mother she was going round the corner to look at blouses. She carried Veda off to inspect them, too.

Dr. Bob took Veda's seat.

He noted the worried look with which Margaret followed Helen out of sight.

"Heart sick about this marriage, Margaret?" he asked sympathetically.

The tears filled her eyes in spite of her. "Just that, Bob. It mustn't be—it can't be! But I've done every enduring thing I can to stop it—and I'm powerless. Oh, Bob, can't you do something?"

"What does John think?"

"Oh, John eggs it on. He's delighted to have his daughter take a social position worthy of his family. But he doesn't know, Bob; he doesn't understand. He loves Helen too much to be willing to have her miserable. But she would never confide in him—I've tried to bring them together. But she isn't like the only type of girl he ever knew, and he thinks because she's like her generation instead of his, that there must be something radically wrong with her, or her bringing up. This marriage is the only thing she has planned since she was grown that has ever entirely pleased him."

"I should have supposed that after their long engagement he would have deprecated her break with Derrick," replied the doctor, automatically feeling in his vest pocket for the cigar that invariably accompanied reflection.

"He did at first, but when Maldon came out and he learned he was one of *the* Maldons—besides he never quite forgave Derrick for aiding and abetting me in the appointment. How is the boy? My heart aches for him almost as much as for Helen."

"Sheer grit—he looks harassed. Comes up to the house once in a while. I tried to open up the subject once, but he shut me off so curtly I have never thought it advisable to intrude since. The wound's raw, all right. I hoped Nellen might give you a hint—it's the queerest case I've ever known. If we had any clue we might take a hand yet—but—Poor kids—they're like animals, crawl off by themselves when they're hurt instead of behaving like rea-

soning beings." Dr. Bob growled out this last as if he felt personally aggrieved at their lack of trust.

"Derrick's no kid, Bob, and he's too much the gentleman to complain if the fault's Nellen's. Oh, Bob, I blame myself that the child's doesn't feel free to confide in me. She's always told me every single thing until this trouble with Derrick started. You don't suppose my being so busy with outside things made me seem unsympathetic, do you?"

"I do not!" he denied flatly. "Just like a woman trying to shoulder the blame for the entire family!"

"Well, you know they always insist that everything goes at sixes and sevens when the woman steps out of the home. I could never forgive myself if I thought I had failed the child!"

"Failed the child? Good Lord! Why, you have fairly made her character by hand, a stitch at a time."

She was searching his face with the appealing gaze of a child. An impotent irritation against the injustice of life seized him. Always the finer-grained human being seemed to be at the mercy of the villain or the dolt. There were ten dolts to one villain and the harm they wrought was more hopeless because you pitied their stupidity.

"Margaret, stop it! The trouble with you women is you have never learned to cuss—you sit around and worry—or cry, which is debilitating. You need never expect to be the equal of my noble sex until you learn to swear. When a man is in doubt, he swears. When he makes a blunder, he swears. It's a fine invigorating exercise, and it shifts the blame to the other fellow, which gives him courage to go on and make a few more blunders. Now, if the man is as much stronger and more knowing, as he lets on, he is perfectly competent to shoulder the responsibilities and the hard knocks and the unpleasant messes of life which the weaker vessel usually hogs herself—or has thrust upon her. Why not blame John a little bit? He's quite as likely to have spilled the beans as you. And his shoulders are at least three inches broader."

Margaret laughed as the doctor intended. "You certainly are a comfort, Bob. I enjoy your logic if I don't

find it convincing. You know I think that's just what Derrick's done, shouldered the blame."

"It would be just like the little runt to try to be altogether a man," Dr. Bob growled. "Well, I must be going—promised to look in on old Greeley—buck up, Meg, the case isn't hopeless. So long."

Dr. Bob rarely used her old girlish nick name. It cheered her inexpressibly to hear it from his lips. It was like a benediction or a caress. It seemed to supply a sure strength for her to lean upon, and Margaret very certainly longed to lean just now.

Dr. Bob encountered Helen and Veda returning, their arms full of parcels. He assumed an ecstatic expression. "Bargains—oh, joy! Nellen, I am expecting the late Solomon to pale beside your glory. Say, could you possibly spare a half hour from this glorious pastime of shopping to help me out with some curtains? Mammy, she say, 'it's plumb disgraceful for we all to have sech down at the heel curtains. No, sah, she wouldn't be caught dead with no sech curtains.' You see, it's pressing enough to interrupt even a trousseau. And how am I to know whether I want morning-glories betanze, or white holly hocks on a red field, or mosquito netting, or tulle? I'm bound to be victimized, if you don't take a hand."

Helen threw up her hands, "When, where, how? I'm at your service." The doctor smiled a satisfied smile. "Suppose I call for you at four-thirty this afternoon."

"Delighted! I'll be ready, but I bet you don't get round till the shops are closed. You'll have a sudden call and little Helen and the curtains can go hang."

"The curtains, sure—that is the intention, but not pretty Helen. Think how it would hurt Helen."

"At four-thirty on the dot, Doctor!" Helen kissed her hand.

"At four-thirty on the dial!" he contradicted.

Dr. Bob despite many good resolutions of "never again" was about to mount his Rozinante once more.

The curtains were bought in a jiffy. The doctor had an absolutely open mind on the subject of those curtains. He

would buy pussy willow taffeta or barred scrim as his adviser should dictate.

After the curtains were duly ordered, the doctor became ravenous for tea.

"A quiet corner of the Country Club would be just the place, eh, Helen?"

They found no one in the dining room except a disgruntled waiter who considered tea at the Country Club in December a disgusting innovation, and served them sulkily. There was a dinner on later. The room was cozily warm, and the vistas of snow-covered mountains through the great arched windows, magnificent.

It carried Helen back to the evening when she had driven out with Derrick for the skating. She was painstakingly trying to obliterate all such memories and to look forward to the extravagant gay life that lay ahead. She had caught a glimpse of Derrick on the street today. Something within her ached for hours afterwards. She had not actually heard his voice since that night. One or the other had always seen the other one in time to prevent an encounter.

She assured herself over and over that she had done the only thing a self-respecting girl could on receipt of such a dismissal as he had sent. But she did not believe it. In her heart she knew that in some way the fault was hers. "It's too late now, to do anything!" She often said this out loud defiantly.

Having the girl and the golden opportunity for peace-making ready to his hand, Dr. Bob was at a loss how to proceed. Helen looked sober, though she was doing her best to be satisfactorily frivolous. She knew Dr. Bob regarded her as very young in spite of her twenty-six years, so she tried to play up and amuse him. To-night, the playing faculty seemed paralyzed.

They had cinnamon toast and marmalade and one cup of tea each. Then they started over again and had another cup of tea and more cinnamon toast and more marmalade. The doctor had an inspiration and ordered cake. But he had not found an opening to his liking. At last in despair

he plunged and landed with both feet in the thick of the subject.

"Nellen, your mother is worrying herself sick about you."

"I know it—I wish she wouldn't. I'm perfectly all right. If Mummy wasn't the most unworldly soul living she would be gloating over my brilliant prospects."

"And what about Derrick's prospects?" He couldn't have thrown any straighter if he had been coached.

Helen's lip quivered, not wholly because of sympathy for Derrick. It had taken infinite pains and wakeful hours to construct in her fancy a panorama of life with Derrick left out. And in spite of all her efforts he was constantly intruding into this work of art. He did not belong there. She had carefully arranged to leave sentiment and regrets out of this picture. It was to be a moving pageant of clothes and gaiety and social triumphs potent enough to salve the most deeply wounded vanity. It was unkind—it was unfair for Dr. Bob to wheedle her off here just to distress her. She had a mind to tell him so.

The doctor was eyeing her contemplatively—the gaze of the diagnostician, difficult to evade.

She did not want Dr. Bob reading her heart. She would have liked to seal the aforesaid heart up in an envelope plainly marked "To be opened only after my death" as she had read of last wills and testaments being rendered immune to the prying gaze of too curious relatives and friends.

She squirmed uneasily while the doctor patiently waited. To relieve the tension she extracted three lumps of sugar from the heavy plated bowl and began to pile them neatly on her plate.

"He has made his own prospects," she defended.

The doctor considered this. Helen rearranged the lumps. Their architectural possibilities seemed unpleasantly limited. But if she did not keep her hands busy she should cry, and she would be wax in the doctor's hands if she began to cry.

He considerably handed her two more lumps. "Try a wing or a cupola," he suggested.

The waiter hovering in the offing to see if anything more were needed or the doctor had forgotten anything, was disgusted and flung out of the room. He thought the old chap had just proposed, because Helen so persistently maneuvered to keep from meeting the doctor's eyes.

"Funny," said the latter, as the swing door rasped behind the white apron, "that a man who has as keen a political and business sense as Martin should fail so lamentably in looking out for his personal interests."

He observed this in the casual tone of one who discusses the weather. "Of course, a man undeniably does make or mar his own prospects to some extent. In the case of a shrewd man like Martin who deliberately throws away the dearest thing he has in the world, it would be interesting to know the motive."

He knew he was hurting her cruelly. He meant to irritate her out of her reserve.

The lumps of sugar were all taken down and repiled and the fingers handling them trembled.

"You think I know, Dr. Bob, but I don't." She looked him squarely in the eye at last. "I wish to heaven I did!"

"Is that absolutely straight, Helen?"

She considered. "We had a talk that he didn't like . . . but there wasn't anything in it—to make him write me the letter he did breaking our engagement!"

"Possibly a last straw?"

"Maybe," she conceded, "he thought I was keeping something from him he ought to know. It wasn't anything, really—I was just silly last winter—I'd tried to make up for it since I came home—I thought I had till—oh, Doctor Bob, please don't let's talk about it! It's all ended and now I haven't any right to even think about it."

"Nellen, we can't dismiss our accountability so easily as that."

"I'm not, only—when I've promised to marry another man—what good can it do?" She lifted begging tormented eyes to his.

There was merit in this point of view, badly as he hated to concede it. But he was a stubborn man.

"Nellen, if you loved Derrick, it isn't possible that you love this man Maldon."

She was silent.

"Had you tired of Derrick?" He was pushing the privileges of a family friend pretty far.

Helen was prodded almost beyond endurance.

"I don't think you have any right to ask."

"Were you? If you were, I haven't another word to say."

She was tempted. Her lips parted to say yes. It would be so much simpler. But her will betrayed her. What she said was "No," passionately, vehemently, as if the mere thought were a profanation. Then she pushed back her chair and got up. "It's no use—I'm sorry that Mother is taking it so hard, but it's all settled, I tell you—it's settled!"

She set her lips as if she were clamping a lock.

Dr. Bob enlivened the ride home by regaling her with a vivid description of a peculiar case he had attended recently.

When he dropped her at her own door, she drew down his head and kissed him tenderly on the forehead. "Don't think I'm ungrateful—and—be good to Derrick."

The result of the interview was that the doctor's insight into the merits of the case was about as clear as—mud!

But as I have said, the doctor was stubborn—some people, with deliberate brutality, said mulish. He hunted up Martin that self-same evening. The day was spoiled. He apologized to himself for further meddling on the ground that he might as well get the beastly business over with and put himself in tune for wedding bells, if he must.

Martin was just leaving the club for the office after dining. Dr. Bob offered to walk along with him.

Martin was irritable these days. He had rather avoided the doctor since the latter's previous efforts to pump him. Yet he was hungry for just such warm impersonal sympathy as Dr. Bob bestowed upon all the human race. The latter began with the probable extra session of the legislature and the possibilities of resuscitating the Erb Act.

Derrick listened with a show of interest. He even

brought himself to remark casually that this would make Mrs. DeWitt very happy. They were walking rapidly, for the air was sharp. There was no snow yet in the city. The bare boughs threw eery elongated shadows across their path. The lighted interiors glowing through softly curtained windows showed cozy and alluring as they passed. Their breath congealed into white vapor. It carried their thoughts back to trench days. Derrick mentioned it first.

"The unending gnawing physical discomfort and the peace within, ye knew then! We were so gloriously sure of ourselves and our mission. We no more doubted that our efforts were divinely ordained than we doubted the material existence of the stars over our heads. Men of every religion and of no religion—we were all the same. The man who firmly believed there was no God, was as convinced that this task had been set for us as the most visionary mystic. What was it, Doc? And shall we ever be sure of anything again? Or is one such experience supposed to suffice for a lifetime?"

"There isn't anything man so passionately wants to believe as that things are ordered. I've never been quite able to decide whether it is mere finite cowardice in the presence of the vastness and power of the forces that oppose man or whether it is a God-given consolation. One thing is sure, too many people blame destiny for their own puerility. It takes prodigious courage and faith to buck the trend of events. Our spiritual inertia is even more hampering than our physical."

"I don't know," said Martin, troubled. "It doesn't seem to me it's so much inertia as uncertain vision. You can mobilize all your force easily enough when you are sure."

Derrick was yielding to the universal human temptation to try to fit the immutable and the eternal to his own particular need.

"Human vision can never be certain—certainty belongs to omniscience. But imagination can do wonders. You ought to have that, Martin, with your Irish forebears not a generation away. Take a chance, boy, take a chance!"

There was no connection between these abstractions and

Helen DeWitt, but Martin's face flushed and then paled at the doctor's words. His subconscious thoughts of her were like a dirge to every waking act. He hadn't supposed these thoughts were quite so open to the public, as this unsought advice implied.

"You think I'd better buy out Cartright's stock then and take a chance on paying for it?" He dared his friend to hint that this was not what he had had in mind all the time.

Dr. Bob was imperturbable. "Why not? You would control the policy of *The Republican* absolutely then—and it would increase your influence. That's about the biggest asset next to the circulation, isn't it?"

"Doc, you're all right. Now, say what you came to say. To-day is the day after in this case. It's no use, but I'll listen."

Martin's sudden change almost robbed the doctor of his glibness. He considered before replying, though he had had his line of attack mapped before he left home.

He discarded it in favor of a direct dash.

"Thank you, Martin, I can sleep better if I get it out of my system. It isn't much. I had a talk with Nellen to-day and I secured a fact that I thought should be your property to do with as your heart and conscience dictate." He paused.

"Shoot!" said Derrick impatiently.

"She owned that she still loved you. Nellen is foolish, impulsive, hasty, but the gods grant but one youth—put your darn pride in your pocket, lad. Good night!" Dr. Bob vanished before Derrick realized the full force of his words.

Nothing happened during the next five days to indicate that he had so much as heard what the doctor said. Dr. Bob took the trouble to improvise an errand to the DeWitts' to assure his own eyes and ears that the status quo had not changed. He almost fell over a delivery boy laden with bandboxes. This exhibit was not reassuring. When Margaret greeted him, he did not need her inquiry as to whether he had thought of anything, to convince him of

the immutable perversity of fate once it got contrary. Her face showed pathetic lines of weariness.

He was so moved that he went out from the house a few moments later and kicked a fawning cur that came sidling up to him as he climbed into his machine. This untoward act made the dog's fortune for life. The doctor was instantly repentant, and when he had noted the dog's protruding ribs, ruefully gathered him up and took him home as a present to Mammy.

Derrick had taken his fact with several degrees of allowance because he knew the doctor was fond of him and incorrigibly romantic. Still, even thus crippled, the fact exhibited marvelous vitality. Whenever his reason successfully made away with it, a re-incarnation promptly took its place.

His pride and his sense of honor both shrank from approaching Helen once she had engaged herself to another. Still, if she had done it under a misapprehension—if he had been hasty—his unworthy suspicion of her was constantly rising up to reproach the sincerity of his chivalric decision to release her. He had finally decided that such suspicion was untenable, but what if her woman's intuition had suspected his momentary disloyalty? What if his real impulse had been a craven shrinking from distress for himself, rather than a generous desire to free her as he had persuaded himself? He mulled over these ideas till there was one only hope for sanity—to lay the matter before her again.

He rang the DeWitt door bell on the fifth evening in an unbearable state of nervous tension. John Camberwell came to the door and told him Helen was out and would not return until late. His manner at first suggested that he expected Derrick to take this as a dismissal. Then he seemed to think better of it and invited him in.

"I should like to have a moment's conversation with you myself," he said with frigid formality.

Martin bowed and walked in.

Mr. DeWitt seated him punctiliously.

"You will appreciate my surprise—h-m-n—at your

calling here this evening under the circumstances. May I ask to what we owe the honor?" His polite insolence made Martin grit his teeth.

"I am sorry that my presence is unwelcome, Mr. DeWitt. I have recently learned something that convinces me that Helen is laboring under a misapprehension which I wish to correct."

His host regarded him with narrowing eyes. His delicate shapely hands pressed the arms of his chair nervously. Derrick noted how like Helen's hands were to his.

"May I inquire the nature of this misapprehension?"

Martin rose. "It is a matter solely between Helen and myself. I do not care to go into particulars."

"I beg you to be seated. There is a word or two I wish to say to you." He reluctantly sat down again and lifted his brows inquiringly.

"I think you are laboring under a misapprehension in thinking that you can have any subject to discuss with my daughter solely. Her relation with you is ended and her future too nearly concerns both Mrs. DeWitt and myself, for us to wish her peace of mind to be further disturbed by you. She is happily entered upon a new engagement which, with no disrespect to yourself, promises to be more in keeping with the position in the world my daughter is fitted by family and breeding to assume. As her father, I feel justified in requesting you to make no further effort to see her."

Derrick's face was livid. "And if I decline?"

John Camberwell's lineaments sank into a network of querulous lines. He spoke with a certain dignified pomposity that carried weight.

"Your honor as a gentleman will not permit you to decline such a request. My daughter was not happy during her engagement with you. She herself was never willing to set the marriage date. She was singularly lacking in the innocent joy one naturally expects of the prospective bride. At the time I deemed it merely a young girl's shyness. But her conduct since her engagement to Mr. Maldon has been such a delightful contrast that I shudder to think how nearly she let her sense of honor commit her

to the false step of marrying you. Helen is now a different being. She is as joyously gay as a singing bird. Her thirst for pleasure has increased a hundred fold. It would be wantonly cruel, sir, for you to intrude upon her new felicity with any remembrance of the past. I appeal to your generosity."

John Camberwell was almost eloquent. His logic was more convincing than any Derrick had ever heard from his lips. The man was entirely sincere. He believed every word he uttered. Helen had been feverishly gay. She had been doing her girlish best to delude both her parents and herself into the belief that she was wholly content with life. Her father was not observant enough to notice the weary look in her eyes when she came down in the morning or the constant restless play of her hands. It took her mother's eye to see these.

It was evident to Martin that he was sincere. He tried to reconcile it with what Dr. Bob had told him. Which was mistaken? Dr. Bob saw her rarely, her father daily. Helen had many resemblances to her father physically. Was it possible she was more like him in her demands on life than any of them had guessed? He had thought of her as being like Margaret in essentials, only more impulsive, more temperamental. He had heard that many women were late in unfolding their real characters, tending rather to mold themselves to the desires of those about them during their earlier years. Was Helen of these, and was she now with the brilliant prospects ahead of her just coming into her own hidden ambitions, and flowering because of it? It seemed only too probable.

He did not reply to Mr. DeWitt's appeal for several minutes. The old clock in the hall ticked deliberately on as it had on so many previous nights of his remembrance. The whole place was maddeningly familiar and redolent of Helen. He rallied his wits to ask a few questions, to argue that Mr. DeWitt might be mistaken in reading Helen's mind. He went so far as to intimate that he had information contradicting Mr. DeWitt's conclusions.

John Camberwell's look of pitying condescension was pleasantly tolerant.

"Ah, my wife! Mrs. DeWitt is very much attached to you—it is a disappointment to her—she does not feel that she can regard another man so completely as her son. You seemed in a measure to take the place of our boy, having been in the service and all. But—" he said the last with the genial finality of one who having made his point does not wish to distress the vanquished further—"it is my daughter's welfare not her mother's we must consider."

Derrick was convinced. When the door closed behind him with a rasping click, it shut him outside of all his hopes. And youth without hope is a veritable No Man's Land, gray and gruesome, and full of rotting memories.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LANDIS SENIOR MEETS MRS. O'REILLY

**M**INETTE did not go back to the manicure parlors until late September. The Minette who had left in May never went back. She was reincarnated into passionate motherhood. Minette's strength of will seemed to flow back the moment she held her own flesh and blood in her arms. Her strength of body returned as quickly as was humanly possible, stimulated by the enthusiasm of her maternal devotion. All the unsatisfied longings of Minette's starved girlhood, all the possessiveness of her ardent temperament, all the yearning disappointment over Jock's incomplete affection, were poured into her passion for her child. Her joy was so intense during those first few weeks it was terrifying.

Veda trembled lest some mischance should rob her of this happiness, and left her to go back to her own work full of misgivings. The doctors and nurses at the hospital watched her with the child in sympathetic delight. Her story was known only to Dr. Bliss and to the one nurse, but it was patent to all that she was singularly alone in the world, and her winsomeness and youth won everyone.

She was not without attention. Margaret DeWitt and Dr. Bob telegraphed flowers and Margaret sent a sweet letter and a dainty gift. If it had by any untoward chance been her Helen, Margaret thought pityingly. The girls from the manicure parlors heard, and sent posies, and brought little offerings. And Minette displayed her babe as proudly as if she had every right to vaunt her happiness. Possibly she had the highest right—the claim of great sacrifice.

One small happening touched Veda nearly. Hardwick sent her a generous check to be used for flowers and anything else that would help, with the request that Minette

should not know of the gift. He wrote much more than this in the letter. He even ventured to suggest how very much he missed Veda. Hardwick had never taken stock of his emotions. He never wished to have emotions, and Veda had grown on him as imperceptibly as a habit. She was his right hand man at the works. Her tact and intelligence saved him many misunderstandings and annoyances in handling his working people, especially the women. It never occurred to him that she was attracting him as a woman. Yet he had been in a state of mind for some time when he could have cheerfully said his prayers to her, had he indulged in such exercises. But one might say one's prayers to a dame in the fifties. If it go no farther than that, a man is still emotionally safe.

The fact that he had seemed to know her always as Ivan's betrothed, the companion fact that she was a working girl—had inhibited romance. Hardwick cared but little for social distinctions but he cared enormously for refinement in women. It did not coincide with his training or experience to expect it in a factory girl. Consequently he never dreamed of seeking a wife among factory girls. Of late the rumors which came persistently to his ears of Veda's rupture with Ivan had roused his keen sympathies for her. He thought her well rid of a potential brute, but he supposed she must be suffering, and he resented her having to suffer. So his letter was more tender than he knew.

It was handed to her while she was sitting by Minette. She hastily concealed the check, fearing Minette might inquire concerning it. But Minette was still too weak to be easily curious. Veda read the letter over several times as if she could not quite grasp it. On the fourth reading Minette's attention was attracted.

"What on earth are you blushing about, Veda? I didn't know Ivan was such a fire-eater."

Veda had not known she was blushing. She denied it vehemently.

"The room is a little close—that's all." She hastily opened the window a thought wider, fussing about busily arranging a screen to protect Minette from any possible

draught. "It isn't from Ivan; it's just a business letter from Mr. Hardwick. He wants me to do some things for him."

"Oh!" Minette lay idly thinking for several minutes, then, turning to Veda, remarked apropos of nothing, "Ivan's not good enough for you, Veda."

Her friend looked at her calmly. "I am not going to marry Ivan. I didn't write you for fear it might worry you."

"How long since?"

"Almost three months."

"Has—has Ivan decided not to marry you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, if I know Ivan, and I think I do, he'll never give you up. Has he ever agreed to?"

"No, he's trying to hold me to the betrothal."

"Look out, Veda, he'll make trouble for you. He's the kind that thinks he owns the woman through all eternity. Pity the Lord couldn't average them up a little better."

Minette began to pick at the covers with nervous fingers. Veda eyed her anxiously.

"Don't worry about me, dear. Ivan won't make trouble as long as I don't marry anybody else."

Minette did not answer. Her thoughts had left Ivan far behind. She was thinking of Jock.

Had he heard? Would he take the trouble to inquire? Had he graduated? Where was he and what would he do?

She found it bearable to think of him now since she had her boy. And she knew he still cared. His arms had told her that. But it was his stubborn pride—his whole training. Sometimes she almost forgave him for his attitude toward herself, but when she thought of their boy something fierce, implacable, seared her.

She didn't get very far with the thought that day. Veda divined the tenor of her musing and interrupted it with gossip about the girls of the L. and A. till the nurse brought in the baby.

But the thought returned persistently. The boy had a right to a father. Try as she would she could never make

up for the want of a father. And the name? He was a Landis—he was not O'Reilly or Doty. Whether she was worthy or not, the child had a right to his father's name.

In spite of the kindness that surrounded her she knew she was the subject of comment. She did not mind much for herself. She had become inured. It was quite possible to live without the approval of the world and there were many friendly people who did not insist on knowing one's entire history before passing the time of day.

But when the boy discovered that other boys had fathers and he did not? What should she tell him? She clasped the pliable warm little body closer with an inexpressible yearning. The perfection of his small person was an unending marvel to her. She would spread out the tiny rosy fingers to contemplate and caress them for minutes at a time. They were absurdly like Jock's long strong fingers, these tiny helpless ones. If Jock could only see them—and the broad little back, surely—surely?

The other fathers came always in the evening—many again in the morning. She could hear the telephone inquiries. She knew them off by heart just by the nurses' replies. "Had she slept well?" "The pain was gone? Good!" "And the child?" "Had nursed like a little man." "The little beggar!" She caught the young father's chuckle of pride in the infectious quality of the nurse's laugh. "The fathers are sillier over them than the mothers!" one nurse had declared. "Good Lord, they think it never happened before!"

And she had seen some of the men's faces as they passed her open door, radiant or anxious or happily sheepish. She heard them babbling like children often to the nurses as they passed. "I don't see how they can have anything left to wish for—when it is like that," she said, wistfully aloud. She had not meant to speak.

Dr. Bliss had just paused at the threshold to admire the pretty picture she made with the downy head against her breast.

"Like what?" he demanded matter of factly.

She pointed to the hall beyond. "Listen."

A young father was treating one of the nurses to a

rhapsody on his eldest born whom the nurse was about to bear away. "Aw just a minute—have a heart, Nurse. Isn't he the strongest little cuss?"

The doctor shut the door gently.

"It is the most beautiful thing in the world if humanity didn't constantly spoil it by its unworthiness. Don't grieve too much over what is denied you, little mother. There isn't a child in the hospital that is finer or sturdier than yours. If you do your part—without bitterness—he stands a fair chance to lead them all yet. But don't, don't make the mistake of feeling sorry for him!"

Veda went back to Capitol City at the end of two weeks.

When John Perry O'Reilly was three weeks old, Minette went home with Niccolo and Tessa. The summer slipped by quickly. Her days were full and both she and the child thrived marvelously. Dr. Bliss after some inquiries as to her means, had advised her not to go to work before October.

It was a wrench to leave the babe for a day when she did go. She found it possible to stay on still at the farm. There was a station within a mile, and she could take the suburban train at seven-thirty in the morning and return at six in the evening. She took up her work again with zest and for the next two months life was monotonous but satisfying.

After her return home, Veda wrote that Jock had graduated and gone to Alaska for the summer. In October she wrote that he had gone east to take a course in business management. Much against his will, Hardwick said.

Minette had become almost apathetic about Jock once again. Her one sore grievance against fate now was that her boy was denied his father's name. She brooded a good deal over this.

One afternoon early in December, Fate or Coincidence or some unholy agency guided the footsteps of Mr. Bracy Landis to San Francisco for a visit, and three days after his arrival, to Mrs. Hardy's Parlors. Mr. Landis had tired of Mademoiselle Adele. If he were not looking for a successor he was at least in a mood to be amused. Manicure parlors often employed very amusing young ladies. His

finger nails demanded immediate care he decided after a *recherché* lunch. Wanting a manicure he hunted for a select establishment and he found Mrs. Hardy's. Nothing could be simpler. There would seem to be no room for any other agency than Mr. Landis' own caprice.

When Minette, just finishing off a fair dame's pearly nails, glanced up from her table to see Mrs. Hardy advancing with Mr. Landis in her wake, she was panic-stricken. What did he want with her? What had he come for? Were they trying to get hold of the child?"

She was but little reassured by Mrs. Hardy's curt: "Can you do this gentleman's nails next, Mrs. O'Reilly?"

She motioned him to be seated. Mr. Landis regarded her thoughtfully for some moments. Critically, for some moments longer. Then as he noted the genuineness of her rose-leaf coloring and her shimmering hair, his gaze became positively enthusiastic. "Some little looker, all right!" He began to try to draw her out. Minette answered in monosyllables, but when she caught his eye once, she blushed. Her blush made a great hit with Mr. Landis. Having no clew to its cause, he accepted it as a tribute to his own fascinations. By the time she had finished, he was almost more than enthusiastic over her charms and was beginning to be loquacious.

Minette was hopelessly at sea. What was he trying to gain by all his silly compliments? When he rose and pressed a dollar into her hand as a tip and inquired on the same instant if she wouldn't like to go out to dinner with him, she took the tip, though the silver burned her fingers, and declined coolly.

She lived some distance out, she said, she could not make evening engagements.

Mr. Landis credited her refusal to the strait-laced notions of Mr. O'Reilly and was in no wise affronted. He found an easier companion for that evening and returned to the charge the very next day. Middle age is as impatient of obstacles as callow youth. The next morning Minette found a bunch of violets on her table and a card. She wondered if it were possible—and if it were—why?

Mr. Landis continued his attentions despite frigid discouragement for days. Her coldness seemed to increase his ardor. She was still hunting for some hidden motive.

The girls at the parlors began to tease and to remonstrate with her for not taking what the gods seemed so anxious to provide.

"You're a fool, Minette. He's got the most swagger car in Frisco. I saw him drive up to the St. Francis. And Mag here says he treated some chicken to a ten per dinner last night at Tait's. Go in and have a little fun, girl. It'll do you good."

"Sure, O'Reilly, you can shake him when you get tired!" approved a second.

This reasoning did not appeal to Minette, but his attentions were making her uneasy. If there was a trap she might as well find out what it was. She delighted Mr. Landis by consenting to go for a short drive with him immediately after working hours.

Mr. Landis exerted himself to be entertaining. He was almost respectful. Mrs. O'Reilly had intrigued his interest with her charm and her coldness till he was positively eager. He was savoring his own eagerness. It almost counterfeited his vanished youth. And Minette enjoyed the wonderful car. She had always adored luxury. She was slowly becoming convinced that he did not recognize her. Come to think of it, she did not suppose even Jock knew her as Mrs. O'Reilly. If he had come to the Parlors accidentally? She studied over the situation a good deal. If she could really acquire an influence over him, she might persuade him to do something for the child, though she had no definite idea as to what or how. A few days after the drive she consented to go out to dinner with him. She even revived a wraith of her old fantastic gaiety for his delectation.

One moment she despised herself for doing this, the next she assured her conscience she was doing no real harm and some good might come of it. Deep down in her heart the old man's admiration had a quality of balm to her self-respect. She thought of Jock's rage if he knew. She did

not intend that he should know, but if he ever did—Minette shrugged her shoulders quite in her oldtime girlish way.

But she gave her company very charily to Mr. Landis Senior. Partly because it broke into her precious hours with her babe. Partly, because as she came to know him better, his personality bred only disgust. She was minded to break off the acquaintance time and again, but something held her.

In the meantime under this tantalizing regime Mr. Landis was becoming more and more infatuated. After six weeks' incessant wooing he had not been awarded so much as a kiss. A pearl and sapphire pin he tried to lay at her shrine at Christmas was coldly refused. Minette was as proudly correct as any grand dame. The Honorable Bracy damned her for her airs even while he acknowledged their lure. "The baggage—does she expect me to marry her?—out of a manicure parlor? Good Lord!"

This preposterous idea was purely an emanation of his own brain. Minette had never dreamed of such a dénouement. By the middle of January Mr. Landis, not having advanced his suit one whit by all the expensive attentions Minette could be brought to accept, was beginning to toy with the notion of marriage in the privacy of his inner consciousness. He was fast reaching a point where life did not seem worth living without her. He had discovered some time before that Mr. O'Reilly was no longer in evidence. He had also learned of the existence of the child and its tender months. He began to sound Minette as to what had become of Mr. O'Reilly.

Minette was merely amused until he asked cautiously if she had been divorced. Her face went white then. She did not reply for several minutes. Finally, she muttered thickly that she was free. She still did not suspect the trend of his thoughts. Three days later he asked her to marry him.

She refused him flatly.

Mr. Bracy Landis had obtained pretty much everything he wanted in life and he didn't propose to be balked now. He stayed away for a week and returned to the charge.

After Minette's first impulse of disgust and astonishment had passed, strange and enticing thoughts crept into her mind. And the first was: "If I could persuade him to adopt the baby, he could have his rightful name!" She made inquiries as to laws concerning adoption and was amazed to find that inheritance also followed legal adoption.

Minette lay awake night after night thinking. Thinking of Jock—of Veda—of Margaret DeWitt and Helen and Dr. Bob and Mr. Hardwick. Would they all despise her if she did such a thing? But her child had a right to the name of Landis. She would get up and gaze at him in his pink and dimpled slumber until no sacrifice would seem too great to bring him into his own. In the morning when he laughed and cooed she felt she could put her body on the rack joyfully for him. She would have gone to Mr. Landis and capitulated but for the thought of the kind friends in Capitol City and their horror. For she did not mince matters with herself. It would be a shameful and unnatural relationship. But there was a certain hard satisfaction when she thought of Jock. He would have denied his own flesh and blood its rights. He had not thought her good enough to enter his father's house as his own wife. What if she entered over his head? What if she won for her child the rights he would not give?

When Mr. Landis returned and proposed a second time, Minette told him frankly that she could never love him, but that if he would legally adopt her boy, she would marry him for the sake of the child's future.

Mr. Landis was amazed but finally agreed and urged an immediate ceremony. He did not intend to have her change her mind.

Minette also had no intention of having him change his mind about the adoption. She had the papers made out by a lawyer and Mr. Landis preceded the wedding ceremony with certain legal rites of adoption before the court.

The marriage took place in two days. They departed immediately for a month's honeymoon in Hawaii, having installed a trained nurse at Niccolo's in charge of John Perry Landis, who had suddenly become a very important

person indeed. It seemed reasonably certain that he would hereafter have the care and bringing up of a gentleman. His paternal grandfather, though entirely unaware of his relationship, had already discovered that the way to please his bride was to show interest in her child. And he was more anxious to please the manicure lady than he had ever been to please any human being before.

Minette signed the register as Minette Doty O'Reilly. The first part of the name had a familiar look to Mr. Landis that puzzled him for a few moments, but he soon forgot all about it.

Jock Landis heard the news in Paris through the medium of a meager cablegram from his parent. It conveyed nothing vital except that "the old man had made a fool of himself at last as he always knew he would." So Jock expressed himself filially to his chum and traveling companion.

Veda had been mistaken about that business course in Boston.

Landis senior had led the horse to water, but had not been able to make him drink. That last interview with Minette had had a most disconcerting influence upon Jock. He was utterly unwilling to admit that he could not be happy without her. He was still more unwilling to admit that her nascent yearning for her babe had wakened any response in himself. Yet he had never been more moved in his life than when that little ineffectual movement startled him into an emotion utterly uncharted. He was lost between conflicting impulses.

The child had become an entity that was automatically asserting a mystical claim upon himself. He resented this claim indignantly, but at the moment his resentment was keenest, he found himself responding to it.

The girl of the rose-colored dress, who was Winifred Gates, became hateful to him. He graduated in a haze. He went to Alaska to escape his own thoughts. He resolved firmly that he would make no further inquiry concerning Minette, but he wrote to Veda within twenty-four hours after he formulated the resolve.

Veda was merciful or unmerciful, according to the effect

she expected the letter to have on him. She wrote a good deal of detail, especially of the babe and how much it resembled him—and how beautiful and desolate Minette was. Jock started to tear up the letter impatiently, then thought better of it and carried it in his pocket all summer. He hated to come back from Alaska. He hated to go to Boston. The thought of pinning himself down to anything was unthinkable, but his father insisted and Capitol City seemed more unthinkable than the university—more grinding.

Soon after he arrived in Boston he met his chum enroute for Europe. Jock promptly invested his matriculation money in a steamer ticket. Once safely on the other side, he cabled home for more funds and proceeded to do Paris.

His father's cablegram broke into this amusement rudely. To be told that he had married Mrs. O'Reilly on a certain date in January was indefinite enough to give him much food for thought. Despite his remark to Miss Gates he had never believed his father would marry again. Certainly not beneath him. And if this Mrs. O'Reilly were not an unadulterated nobody, her name libeled her. "Landis-O'Reilly." The combination choked him.

When he received a letter some three weeks after the ceremony advising him of the existence of a child and that his father had legally adopted it, his wrath and disgust broke bounds. He was sharp enough to see the handwriting on the wall for himself, if his new step-mother chose to push her advantage. She was manifestly strategically on the inside.

The flavor was gone from Paris. Late in February he sailed for home without taking the trouble to notify his father of his changed plans.

To Minette's loyal group of friends in Capitol City, the shock of her marriage was not so mercifully veiled. When Derrick Martin heard the news he gasped. A moment later he exclaimed: "Ye gods, what an exquisitely diabolical revenge!"

"Oh, no," protested Veda, "Minette wouldn't—she did it for the child—don't you see?"

Derrick saw that side and several other ugly complica-

tions which he hoped had not intruded into Veda's mind.

"I wonder if Jock knows who his father's wife is," he answered. Derrick liked Jock in spite of this damning business. He believed he deserved to suffer, but this—this was going a little strong.

"I wonder," remarked Hardwick, "how long it will take Mr. Landis to find out who his wife is."

"His point of view might be of interest," returned Derrick unsympathetically. He thought the Honorable Bracy had got precisely what was coming to him.

"I shouldn't care to be the man who tells him," he added with a wry smile. The elder Landis' end of it struck him as almost humorous in the light of his ruthless past.

"No man would be so rash," put in Hardwick, "some woman will put him wise." Hardwick's tone was dryly sarcastic. "It was precisely what you might expect from a girl taken from such an environment," he had said to Derrick earlier. "I tell you it takes breeding to develop any real refinement or delicacy of feeling. Minette and some of the other clever ones acquire a good surface imitation, but scratch 'em—they're all alike!"

Derrick was rather surprised at his heat. He would have been still more surprised if he had known that Hardwick almost hated Minette for this loathsome marriage because it weakened his faith in Veda. He had wanted Veda to cry out against it—to cast off Minette utterly because she had descended to this unnatural thing. But Veda had done nothing of the sort.

She was maternally pitiful. "Poor girl—she doesn't understand! Oh," she had clutched Hardwick's arm in sudden fear, "you don't think Jock will kill her when he finds out?"

Hardwick was savage with his own disappointment. Was this all Veda had to say? "Nonsense," he had replied brutally, "no such good luck! That sort of a mess doesn't straighten out so simply."

He didn't mean a word of it, but Veda took him in dead earnest.

After this conversation he kept away from her and she

avoided him. It was like a weight for Veda to carry. Hardwick and Dr. Bob were the only two men Veda completely trusted. She had come to feel that whenever the man's interest and the woman's clashed, the man's hand was invariably raised to dash the woman aside. But these two men had given her something staunch and incorruptible to pin her faith to. Now, the younger man—the one she knew best—the one she had seen tried out in a score of ways, was flinging her faith back in her face by implying that the woman's fate was negligible. It hurt her as nothing in her whole life had ever hurt her. It seemed to sap her faith in the goodness of God. It seemed to cheapen—to render of no account everything she had ever accomplished. Of what use to try to make the girls intelligent and self-respecting if they were merely supplementary beings to the men?—things to be cast aside carelessly by the best of them, when they were no longer useful to society or to some individual man? Veda's whole life had been a passionate practical denial of this theory. She had seen both men and women sent to the scrap heap in that tragic girlhood. Flung there, not because they were no longer useful, but because they stood in the path of the criminal and the bestial. She knew what brute force did when it got in the saddle. Was the brute in the man never to be conquered by any civilization? By any idealism? Was it perennially latent, ready to spring out and throttle any aspiration of the woman that interfered with its pleasures or comfort, as Bolshevism throttled every human life that stood in the way of its lusts? As she had come to see at last, Ivan would crush out every thought and ideal of hers that thwarted his will—if he could.

And if all men felt so underneath, she wondered if it might not as well be Ivan as anyone else. She could forgive Ivan for his crude impulses because he had been bred little better than a wild creature. But Hardwick, keen, capable, thinking product of the freest civilization on the face of the earth—she said to herself that she never could nor would forgive him. Why, she demanded passionately, had he helped her to organize the girls? Why had he en-

couraged her to try to make them thinking beings—to help them better their lot—to stand together, if they were of less account than the most dishonorable man?

She was going far on very weak premises but she was wandering no farther afield in this vagary than was Hardwick, the astute analyst of men, in his delusion.

There remained Dr. Bob. To say that he was aghast at this unforeseen volte face of Minette's was to put it mildly. Veda told him over the telephone, reading the apologetic telegram Minette had dispatched on her wedding day. Dr. Bob's first thought had been that Veda, who never joked, was surely jesting now—most unpleasantly. When he grasped the facts, he said sorrowfully: "The Lord have mercy on them all!"

Veda brought Minette's first letter to him eager to retain his friendship for Minette. It was trivial and remorseful and begged Veda and the others not to think she had done this for the luxury or the name for herself—it was for the child. Surely, she had a right to make up for her fault to her child.

Veda watched him wistfully. The doctor read the letter and reread it. When he had handed it back and wiped his glasses, he said pityingly: "She's a poor foolish little girl—just barely nineteen now, isn't she?"

Veda nodded.

"And Jock is twenty-one and no power on this green earth can ever undo the misery the two of them have brought upon themselves."

"Then you don't despise her? She's impulsive—she was born that way—but Minette doesn't mean to do wrong—she did it for the child."

Veda was pleading more for her faith in Dr. Bob than for her friend. He noticed her tragic air and studied over it for a minute.

"My dear, I have never been able to despise any human being consistently except Mr. Bracy Landis, and now I am sorry for him! If you want to know whether I'll stand by Minette—of course I'll stand by her. She's going to need her friends a sight worse than she did before—if I'm any prophet."

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Veda astonished the doctor by bursting into hysterical sobs, which the doctor promptly put down to overstrained nerves.

The star which presided over the Landis-O'Reilly nuptials could not be said to be of good omen. The verdict of the bride's friends was unanimous as to this.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SAB CAT

THE home-coming of Mr. Bracy Landis and his bride was celebrated at the L. and A. works in a manner spectacular if not welcoming. A week after he installed Minette within the colonial portals of his family mansion, a series of mysterious and lamentable accidents began at the works. It is a maxim that misfortunes never come singly, but the misfortunes that happened to the L. and A. machines came in groups and were too nicely calculated to disable the plant, to be the work of blind chance. They testified eloquently to human contrivance and malice.

Emery powder in the gears, cut belting, a monkey wrench left where it could wreck thousands of dollars worth of valuable looms. Hardwick and his chief cursed and worked and wired hurry-up orders east for new fittings, but the greater part of the plant had to be closed down for from two to three weeks, in spite of their utmost efforts.

Capitol City was up in arms over the outrage. The local papers for once forgot local quarrels and united in denouncing the sabotage, insisting that the offenders must be brought to justice. *The Star* went to the extreme of starting a subscription fund to be used in reinforcing the \$5000 reward offered by the L. and A. Co., and the additional \$1000 which Governor Gregg posted to oil the wheels of justice. But the subscription list was not popular. One or two factory owners or heads of corporations, who feared lest their names come next on the U. X. W. black list, contributed a hundred, and a few public-spirited citizens added their mites. But however indignant over this wanton and unprovoked destruction of property, the average American might be, he was too easy going to see in his neighbor's misfortune any special menace to our free institutions.

If the L. and A. had dared to stop the wages, the public would have had more sympathy because the Capitol City pocketbook would have felt a vacuum. But the wages were paid, and the mill hands, being paid, were not disturbing anybody else, in fact were utilizing their unwonted leisure by spending more money than usual in luxuries and amusements. So Capitol City ate and drank and wore good clothes and made merry heedless of the L. and A. troubles, heedless of that ominous shipment of arms which had been a ten days' sensation, and unaware that fully a thousand men were being organized and drilled in small squads under their very noses for the avowed purpose of establishing a radical government in Capitol City and in the nation, and of helping themselves by armed force to the clothes and furniture and homes of their wealthier or more thrifty fellow-citizens.

One class of citizens was chanting "Why worry? Let the other fellow sweat." Another class of citizens was chanting "Why work? Why not take what we want?" Possibly there wasn't as much difference between the two attitudes as many people would like to believe.

So the men had spurts of indignation over their morning paper—this helped to wake them up and put them in trim for business. After that they forgot about it till noon, when they expressed their opinions vociferously at the clubs and restaurants and to acquaintances on the street cars. By night the subject was stale. After all it was merely a matter for the city administration and the police. "If the mayor and the rest of the city commission expected to be re-elected next fall they had better get busy and do something."

The women read the latest bulletins in the papers and exclaimed. The more advanced said: "It's a shame!" The rest declared with conviction "that John said it was a shame!" These seemed to be the only two schools of thought. They were for the most part unconcerned. The only group exceptions to this were the women of the L. and A. The danger was coming closer and closer home to them. Not that any considerable number recognized it as the harbinger of imminent tragedy. Many like their more

prosperous sisters echoed their husbands' opinions. The husbands' opinions were frequently poles apart.

Opposed to the growing revolutionary sentiment was a considerable body of working men from the old-established labor unions who were uncompromising in their denunciations of the sabotage.

"You'll see what you'll see!" some of these declared in reply to the sneering rejoicing of the disaffected, "some of ye'll end up behind the bars. It won't be so damned funny when your wives and kids go hungry and you're hounded out of the country! The laugh'll be on the other side of your face then."

Others attempted to reason seriously. "If you are fools enough to think you c'n scare your Uncle Sammy by saying 'Boo!' a few times, you've got another guess coming. What are a few hundred thousand of you chaps in a nation of millions?"

The worst of it was that aside from the actual conspirators few knew how far the poison had spread. Neighbors distrusted neighbors. Men were chary of taking their wives into their confidence though the earlier U. X. W. rule had been relaxed except for the more important moves. Sons were in the thick of the movement without their own fathers' or mothers' knowledge. It promised so much to inexperienced youth. Wealth, adventure, all their parents had desired in their dreaming youth and failed to obtain, was to be theirs. These looked with pitying condescension on their elders who had been too poor-spirited to conquer the earth and enjoy its fullness.

The L. and A. company was gradually honey-combing the works with spies. Some were hired from among the loyal workmen. They had to be cautious about introducing many strangers into the works lest this rouse suspicion and more ill-will. Though, as Hardwick suspected, matters had gone far past mere ill-will. The factory was in the van of a widely concerted movement of terrorizing destruction.

But Garth Hardwick meant to have a few bolshevists enjoy the noose if it was humanly possible. So he slipped his spies in one by one. Three of the Japanese waiters

in the dormitory dining rooms had entered the service; some of the workmen setting the new machinery in place were also on the list. Mr. Jenkins was again in Capitol City making unprecedented sales of his marvelous glue in the homes of the workmen. He had never been so genial—so sympathetic. Later on he revealed things at the trials that the women swore they had never told to a soul outside of the confessional. Nor was it the women alone who enjoyed his stories. Many of the men idling at home or in the park were rejoiced to enlighten him when he shyly confessed his sympathy with the down-trodden sons of toil.

Hardwick was accumulating more and more definite information. Certain new accidents did not come off accidentally according to schedule. An explosion that Ivan himself personally superintended, failed to explode. It seemed to be a case of a faulty fuse—yet he had left it burning merrily. The workings of providence in favor of the L. and A. Co. began to seem as mysterious to the conspirators as its rulings against it had been previously to the uninitiated.

Ivan took advantage of his leisure to go off on a vacation without leaving his address. If somebody had talked it might be well to be among those not present. It so happened that Mr. Jenkins had a business call that made him board the same train. He sat behind Ivan. The latter neglected to purchase a ticket before entering the train. Mr. Jenkins was also unaccountably negligent. He bought his ticket from the conductor just after Ivan, and to the station next beyond his destination.

That same evening Mrs. Schmidt, standing on the pavement in front of her cottage calling her brood in to supper, saw Veda coming and waited to talk with her. Her chubby youngest, whom Veda's good nursing had helped to rescue from an early grave, played hide and seek in the folds of his mother's skirts.

"I do believe he knows you," said his fond mother proudly. "He'd ought to—I was tellin' Carl t'other evenin' we'd likely never kept him but for you."

Veda was very weary. The double strain of her

estrangement from Hardwick and the trouble at the plant had told on her sadly.

Mrs. Schmidt noticed her haggard appearance. "You're lookin' kind o' peaked—ain't worryin' 'bout that 'ere tiff with Ivan, be ye? Ye needn't—he ain't no more callikatin' to let go of ye than my man is me. Carl does a sight of grumblin' sometimes 'cause I ain't stylish, like some of these girls workin' on their own, but he knows I c'n beat 'em all cookin'—I ain't forgot the tasty old country dishes my mother taught me, and he knows his kids is looked after and me not grumblin' at how fast they come. They knows when they're well off—trust men for that!"

Veda had tried many times to induce people at the works to believe that her betrothal to Ivan was permanently broken. She had succeeded indifferently. To the average American born it seemed a trifling matter—a marriage ceremony was no very binding tie with many of them, but to the foreign born, and many of the children of foreign born, the betrothal was no more to be ruptured lightly than marriage itself. And this feeling persisted in the face of the growing irreligion and the bolshevist doctrines of no-marriage and free love.

To Mrs. Schmidt, Veda was still Ivan's woman. Ivan himself so regarded her in the face of sundry rebuffs. When she found him a dictator in the new community life as he confidently expected to be soon, she would come crawling back fast enough. He had not made much progress with his first transparent scheme of trying to arouse Veda's jealousy by taking one of the prettiest of the girls from Dormitory No. 2 out on all occasions. Veda had been profoundly relieved and grateful. The trouble in this case was that the new love soon tired of Ivan's exactions and threw him over for a dapper young traveling man, who was quite as free-handed and not so quarrelsome.

Connie Brown sounded a warning to Veda after she had listened to the young men's gossip from Ivan's mess hall. "You'd better look out, Veda, or you'll not be rid of Ivan till death you do part!"

Veda had not been greatly disturbed. As she had told Minette, Ivan would not make serious trouble so long as

there was no one else. She had no wish for any one else. She had never classified her growing interest in Hardwick and should have considered it hopeless had she given it a name. Now, that she had set him down as ruthless, she wanted nothing to do with men.

She paid scant attention to Mrs. Schmidt's chatter, occupying herself rather in a little play with the child, who was luring her into a game, darting from behind his mother's skirts and emitting little bubbling chuckles when she pretended to grab him. He was a winsome little lad in spite of his shapeless faded blue cloak. She coaxed him to her, finally, and cradled his warm cheek against her own hungrily. Veda wanted love—but not man's love.

Mrs. Schmidt, after enjoying her offspring's cleverness for a moment, reverted to the worry on her mind, first glancing cautiously about her to make sure there was no one within hearing. It was a raw March evening and the L. and A. streets were almost deserted. Three older Schmidts were coming running at the summons of their mother's yodel but they were still a safe distance away. She leaned nearer Veda.

"Ivan went away this mornin'—he didn't want nothin' said about it. It's along of the movement. And between you'n me there ain't no good comin' of all this puttin' their heads together and drillin'."

"Drilling? How?—why, what do you mean, Mrs. Schmidt?"

"Lawdy, I'd oughtn't to let that out. My man'd near kill me if he knew. But you're all right—ain't you knowed the men folk's been drillin' with guns sence last winter? They ain't goin' to have no gov'ment troops shootin' of 'em down unarmed this time when the big strike starts. But I say they're plum fools to strike and they'll do nought but make trouble fur us all, and we snug and comfortable with five hundred dollars in the savings and a house grander than the pastor lives in in lots of villages in the old country. Seems like men's never content. Why the children's gittin' on fine. Johnny's in the eighth grade and Minna's first year in the high school, and we with all our doctorin' free and a bath tub in the

house and goin' to movies and the union socials. An' they do say while the boss is a little over strict, mebbe—there ain't any factory in the country does as much fur the men as what the L. and A. does. Though there's others say we'd ought to have more profit-sharin'. But Carl, he an' Ivan says it don't make no difference what they do—the whole place is ours by rights and we ain't no call to sit back and let other folks hand us out our own stuff. Mebbe it's ours, but we ain't got it, and I tell him we stand to lose the good things we've got and mebbe he'll git killed or lose his job and it won't be so easy for us as for those with one k-k-id—"

Mrs. Schmidt's flow of revelation was summarily stopped by her oldest born's arrival with a resounding bump against her which temporarily deprived her of speech. Minna had out-stripped her brother in the homeward race but had acquired such momentum that she could only stop by using her mother's two hundred pounds of avoirdupois as a brake.

The children's arrival, together with a peremptory call from Mr. Schmidt, who was within impatiently awaiting his evening meal, ended the conversation. Mrs. Schmidt had no opportunity to even exact a pledge of secrecy. But the whole works trusted Veda and she secretly hoped that Veda might be able to put a stop to the "goin's on" which were worrying her. She was confident that the girl would never let the leak be traced back to her.

Her Carl demanded to know what she had been gassin' about so long and she answered him cryptically, "Ivan's got to look out or he'll never git her!"

"Huh, Ivan c'n take her when we once git things to movin'!"

His spouse stopped in the midst of dishing up a savory stew and stared at him with round eyes.

"You don't mean do like them cut-throats in Rooshia?"

Mr. Schmidt realized that he had been indiscreet. "I don't mean nothin' except that I'm damned hungry and you c'n hustle that food along."

Mrs. Schmidt obeyed but her mind was working disagreeably.

Mrs. Schmidt's revelations supplied Veda with a new perplexity. She had been deeply worried over the continued sabotage. That the new movement was allied with the U. X. W. she had been convinced for months, and that the destruction at the works was an out-cropping of the movement she had also not doubted. But it is one thing to suspect and another to have certain knowledge. She knew that if this conspiracy went on it could only result in bloodshed and misery. The movement might do untold damage, but it was not strong enough to set up a new government. She thanked God for that. But the sooner it was stopped the better. Yet how could she stop it without betraying its leaders? To have Ivan and Carl Schmidt sent to prison for life on her evidence? She pushed back her hair wearily, and quickened her steps.

Dormitory No. 2 was warm and odorous with roast beef and ginger-bread as she entered. The big entrance hall was merry with light and laughter and thronged with girls gossiping in pairs or groups and sniffing the aroma that promised one of their favorite meals.

"This is the life," declared one, "no work and plenty to eat. We're going to dance to-night, coming, Veda?"

"Well, I've had enough loafing in mine—got all sewed up and not a blamed thing to do but listen to Mama talk about dear Henery. She's sure some little talker."

"You'd better get used to loafing 'cause I got a hunch that the ones who queered the machines ain't aiming to lay off any longer on their mischief than till they get running good again. Seem to be celebrating the boss's new wife. Say, I heard to-day it was our little ermine cape Minette. Wouldn't that get you? The papers said O'Reilly. But Brownie swears she saw her and it was Minette Doty!"

"She's dreamin'! Come on, there's the gong."

Veda thrashed out her own personal responsibility the greater part of the night, deciding finally that she would go to Hardwick and tell him enough to put the L. and A. on its guard without incriminating any one. Then perhaps later she could warn Mrs. Schmidt that the authorities had information and it would be only a question of time, till the men would get into serious trouble if they

kept on. This seemed fairly simple in the night but the next morning both errands seemed formidable, and futile. The sabotage had already put the L. and A. on its guard. If she went to Mrs. Schmidt, she would know she had betrayed her. She studied over it all the morning and finally decided to tell Hardwick about the arming and the intended strike, exacting a promise that he would not punish any of the culprits they might be able to apprehend through her information.

This also was a lame expedient. But if she let things run on they might have a temporary repetition of the terrors of her youth here in Capitol City.

She studied how to see Hardwick without attracting attention. The upshot was that she went to Dr. Bob and asked him to send for Hardwick and to give her an opportunity to talk to him in his study. In that case if any one saw them, he would think their meeting accidental. She had been suffering with headaches and could readily explain her visit to the doctor.

The doctor conducted her to his library and rang up Hardwick at the works. Without telling him why he was wanted, he requested him to come in immediately on important business. When Garth arrived he had Mammy show him into the library to wait for him. Hardwick's embarrassment on seeing Veda was acute. He was not pleased at the idea of an indefinite tête-à-tête.

Veda was equally embarrassed for different reasons. His presence moved her strangely. She did not see how she could bring herself to sue for the immunity she must obtain for the conspirators.

Hardwick's face was stern. He had been pitilessly overworked for the past month. His business pride and his confidence in his kind had been brutally shattered by the recent outrages at the works. Where now was his altruistic belief that generous treatment would further the prosperity of the works? Of what use to treat men as men, who preferred to be outlaws? He felt painfully culpable. He had persuaded the L. and A. to an extravagant expenditure as a business proposition, and just as he was in some measure justifying both his humanity and his

business acumen, this sabotage had in hours flung away what he had builded painfully by years of dogged work and persuasion.

"The doctor is a busy man," he remarked banally.

"Yes, but it is I who sent for you, Mr. Hardwick."

Hardwick lifted his brows. "In what way can I be of service?" He was wondering why she had not come to him at his office at the works instead of putting him to all this trouble.

Veda was quick to perceive the slight hostility in his manner. Woman-like she partly divined its cause and jumped at conclusions. In her work for others Veda could reason coolly, sanely. She saved many of her comrades from ill-considered impulses. She planned for them astutely. But in her personal relations she seemed to lose this judicial sanity. The very gift of imagination which enabled her to put herself in the thick of another's perplexities and sympathetically disentangle them, made her morbidly sensitive. Her imagination leaped to the worst construction of her own conduct and her own possibilities. She divined his surprise at his employee's summoning him thus peremptorily here—probably he thought it indiscreet—that she was running after him. Her cheeks flamed at the thought.

It brought back to Hardwick the day he had taken her home in the sleigh. Veda was beautiful with this color in her face. He set his lips a little more grimly. The very last thing he wanted to think about was Veda's beauty.

The girl plunged into her errand. Hardwick listened carefully and asked many questions, among others if she knew where Ivan had gone. Several of these questions Veda declined to answer.

"But," said Hardwick annoyed, "of what account is your information if you cannot trust me with the facts we most need to know?"

Veda clasped the arms of the big easy chair tightly as if she needed something firm to cling to.

"It isn't a question of trusting you, Mr. Hardwick. I have no right to betray my—friends."

He scrutinized her closely. A working girl had some standards of honor then. He had the fancy to draw her out a little along this line.

"I see—you feel that you have a divided duty. I am interested to know if you were forced to make a choice, how you would decide between these two conflicting duties."

"I do not know," she replied frankly.

"It would seem," his tone was cynically cutting, "that as a forewoman of our company your first duty would be to us. Your standing is not the same as the ordinary employee."

"I understand and I have tried to serve the company faithfully, but I have also an obligation to my mates—they trust me—I cannot betray their trust." She looked up at him earnestly. Hardwick had not taken the trouble to seat himself.

"I see—a woman's emotions come first as usual." There was a very perceptible sneer upon his face. It stung Veda to the quick.

"No, no! You do not try to understand! Emotion, no, it is honor, trust, the trust one human being gives another—not for pay—I serve the company for pay—I try to give them full value for every dollar they pay me—I am interested in my work. But my loyalty—I do not sell my loyalty. You rich men come to think you can buy everything. The things that make the lives of the poor enduring are the things money can buy, Mr. Hardwick."

"Then if you have not sold us your loyalty, why do you bring me this story to-day?"

Veda flushed again. She hesitated for several moments, caught unaware, then groped her way. "Because, I have trusted you—you made Mr. Landis tear down those fire traps—you gave us comfortable housing. You have not sold yourself to your employer for money—you, too, have considered your duty to the workmen." A sudden thought irradiated her face. "You have been just as loyal to the interests of your fellow employees—for they are your fellows even if you are a long way ahead—that is

why I dared to trust you. Surely you have just as much a divided duty as I, Mr. Hardwick."

Her hearer's eyes lighted in admiration—and wonder. His reply was almost femininely irrelevant.

"Veda, where did you learn all this?"

She looked her surprise.

"My mother first, I suppose, and experience—my life has not been a pleasant one." She did not see why he wanted to know this but she gravely tried to satisfy his curiosity.

"Are your people still in Russia?"

"My people are all dead. There is no one living of my blood—it was—the bolsheviki—we lived in Moscow. My father was a merchant—they hated them worse than the aristocracy. It was terrible. No one can ever dream how terrible who has not been through it. These poor people here are deluded—they don't know what they would bring upon themselves—they are like children. They see something out of their reach and they want it. You mustn't blame them, Mr. Hardwick. You have done so much for them—you mustn't punish them—just because of their ignorance. I told you, so you could take the fire away from them before it burns us all up as it did in Russia."

Hardwick's thoughts and emotions were in fierce conflict before Veda finished. What he most wanted to do was go down on his knees to her and beg forgiveness that he had so demeaned her in his thoughts. But he had never been in the habit of acknowledging, much less displaying his emotions. It was not in him to do anything spectacular now. Instead, he went to her and held out his hand.

"Forgive me for doubting you—Miss Veda, and I promise you I'll do the very best I can for all concerned. And you'll stand by me? Is it a bargain?"

The Miss Veda brought the flush to her cheeks still again. She understood it betokened a new attitude of respect.

She gave him her hand with a little soft smile and a grateful look from her madonna eyes that nearly swept Hardwick's discretion to the winds. He realized instan-

taneously and painfully what had been ailing him all these months and he rebelled as if it had been a malady.

"I will do anything I can except betray the individuals—you will not ask that?"

"No, I will not ask that. I did not need to ask those questions to-day. I know where Ivan Lapovich is—we are going to try to frighten him into staying away. For your sake I would not have him sent up. I knew every fact you gave me already, except the decision for the general strike—that was a most valuable warning both for us and for the whole country. We knew that large bodies of men were arming though we haven't got them all located yet. They have lain low since the sabotage knowing we would be watching. Oh, they are cunning ducks, all right. But please God we won't let Bolshevism get a hold in this country! You see I am showing you all my cards recklessly. Does it persuade you that I trust *you* completely? I want it to." If Hardwick did not mean his eyes to be tender he should have looked out of the window for they were traitorously soft.

And Veda met them with a shy tender response in her own of which she was totally unconscious.

They were both treading on rainbows after the manner of their kind.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### JOCK MEETS HIS FATHER'S WIFE

A FEW days after the events of the last chapter, the drawing room of Pullman No. 4 on the Overland Limited, coming west from Chicago, was occupied by a handsome athletic youth whose restlessness was soon the talk of the whole car. Young and handsome, rich evidently, and as evidently discontented with or disconcerted by, life, as he had been living it, he was a providential object of interest on a tedious journey. He roamed up and down the aisle and into the smoking compartment at irregular intervals. Sooner or later almost everybody in the car tried to scrape acquaintance. A young girl glanced up at him hopefully when he passed. A full-busted, fully rouged woman of the world or the half world, it is not always easy to make such fine distinctions at a glance, openly invited, with raised eyes and her bag deliberately dropped in his path. He restored the bag but ignored the glance.

Several men with intentions sinister or altruistic—he was so opulently attractive—suggested cards or opened up on business or politics, if they were not fortunate enough to have sons in college about his age. But all in vain. One motherly old lady in black China silk, sure he had been disappointed in love and yearning to mother him, asked him to stop and visit with her. He politely complied and politely answered all her questions, but he unbent not at all. She was secretly relieved when he excused himself.

Jock was bored with himself. He was even more bored with other people. A disagreeable task lay ahead of him and he loathed it. This marriage—and especially the adoption of this ready-made child—was intolerable. He was on his way home to cross swords with the intruders, if possible. He was apprehensive, irritated, indignant

that his father should have so far forgotten his dignity and position as to marry beneath him. And at his age! And to adopt this child, imperiling his own inheritance, looked like downright infatuation or senility—or both. Jock's nerves were on edge. The monotonous humming rumble of the train annoyed him. He was still more annoyed when the rhythm of sound was broken by an irregular clickety click as the train passed a crossing or some imperfection in the track. He sat in the end seat in the observation car for hours watching the telegraph poles run back and vanish into distance or idly counting the semaphores which he sometimes likened to incomplete wind mills, sometimes, gruesomely, to gallows. He found only one pleasant channel for his thoughts. That demanded money and his father's consent to let him idle yet a little longer. Possibly, if he went home and made himself sufficiently *de trop* the old man might consent to almost anything to get him out of the way.

His little scheme had been an inspiration of his voyage. One evening when he had paced the boat deck in the cold moonlight watching the waves multiply into infinity, this happy contrast of coziness had come to him. Why not transport Minette and—the babe—he had never yet prefixed the word by anything more definite than *the*, though his thoughts were strangely possessive—to Paris! The world made little of an irregular ménage there. The little flat Minette had pictured. Really, it wasn't a half bad prospect! He was not ready to admit that the girl had woven herself relentlessly into the fibre of him. But—"she sure had spoiled other women for him!" The minx had a piquancy—a spirituelle—something he had never found in any other. Hang it all, she was his and he wasn't going to give her up! And it was his business to care for them both in spite of her crazy pride.

And the child? He had curious revulsions of feeling when he thought of the child. He had a mental picture made up partly from the description of Veda's letter, partly composite of himself and Minette, but more vividly like a golden-haired babe he had seen in the Tuileries gardens soon after he arrived in Paris. Practically his mental pic-

ture crystalized into as exact a replica of the baby in the Gardens as his memory could construct. And the child was more often in his thoughts in a nebulous way than he knew.

Jock was speeding homeward as fast as the limited could carry him. Not contrite—possessed still by the belief that he could pay, as full indemnity for all obligations, yet beginning to long for some fuller experience of life than such fulfillment promised. Life as a sport had palled on Jock. If he were not willing to assume all its responsibilities seriously, he was at least eager to dally with it as an occupation.

In the white-pillared mansion in Capitol City, Minette was doing her sorrowful best to live up to everything the Honorable Bracy Landis expected of her. So far he was exacting little except her continuous presence. It was too soon for him to notice that Capitol City society did not seem to be welcoming the second Mrs. Landis. He was the proverbial old fool with interest. He lived but to shower gifts upon her and to caress her.

He bought her jewels and furs and every beautiful thing the stores offered for her adornment. Minette would have been tremulously ecstatic over these if they had come from Jock's hands a year and a half before—now this lavishness oppressed her. She would not have it when he proposed to redecorate and refurnish the house.

She could not have put her feeling into words but she felt that it would be a desecration. She wanted to keep the home as Jock had known it—as Jock's mother had arranged it. She did not wish to spoil one familiar nook or corner. She was bringing her son to the home of his father and grandfather; she had never reasoned out the anomaly of her own position in it. Indeed, her own position anywhere was becoming a negligible quantity. Her self-forgetful passion for Jock was fast being transmuted into an equally absorbing passion for his child. It was impossible for Minette to lead an independent existence. She was of those who live only in their emotional relation to others. The home to which Mr. Bracy Landis brought his bride never seemed to her to be his home, but Jock's.

A strict analysis of her thoughts would have revealed a further aberration. She regarded it not so much as the place where Jock had lived, as a shrine dedicated by that living to her memories of him. Jock himself was remote—he might have died, he seemed so entirely removed from her life. Yet she was daily nourishing her spirit by filling his old haunts with her memories of his living presence. Every book she picked up was still instinct with his touch. An old cap of his hung on the hall tree. She never disturbed it but after a time she never looked at it. His physical self was gone, his memory pervaded even the walls.

Jock's old room was made into a nursery. Mr. Landis had ordered this done before their return. He had fixed on this particular room because it was sunny and conveniently located near Minette's. She did not know it had been her lover's. She made no inquiries concerning him. When his father on rare occasions mentioned him, she listened politely with no apparent interest. She was always secretly relieved that no mention was made in his letters of his coming home.

She knew the time must come—she had her defense ready against his arraignment indignation. The day seemed mercifully far off and in the meantime she was absorbed in her child.

Jock Landis descended from the train in his home city at nine-thirty A. M. on a dazzling wintry morning. There was a certain joy in the familiar scenes and the occasional familiar face in spite of the disagreeable homecoming which awaited him. He studied for a moment as to whether to go to a hotel and reconnoiter before committing himself to a doubtful welcome or to assume his rightful place as the son of the house, regardless of what his new step-mother's disposition toward him might be. He decided to go home and have it out. After all the new relation promised an element of adventure that might be piquant. He should rather enjoy holding his own against feminine odds.

His trunk duly ordered to his father's house, he jumped into a taxi and ten minutes later drew up before the

familiar portal. The old place looked natural and—home-like. Ten to one they should get on very well. It might be pleasant to have a woman about again. He ran up the steps and whipped out his latch key light-heartedly.

The big hall was warm and empty. He noticed the old cap hanging where he had left it and augured favorably of the new mistress's friendliness from this trifling circumstance. A glance through the living rooms and library proved them untenanted. He picked up his bag and set out for his own room. There were no signs of life in the upper corridors. "Hm—m regular sleeping palace!" He took out his watch. It was five minutes of ten. The door of his room stood ajar. The room was already occupied.

He stood in the doorway in amused dismay surveying the intruder. The interloper was not aware of his presence at first. He was arduously engaged in trying to convey five pink toes to his mouth with no very flattering success. He bent his fat little body double and tugged at the toes undiscouraged by repeated failures to get more than a taste of the tempting morsels. Jock watched him till the sight seemed so funny he chortled and attracted the small person's attention. The baby looked up, saw smiling eyes, and beamed in return.

He not only beamed, he begged to be taken up with soft inarticulate noises and waving arms.

Jock was not versed in baby dialects but he understood what was wanted and complied gingerly. The child gave a little leap and a crowing chuckle of pleasure as Jock lifted him. Jock was enchanted in spite of himself.

"You jolly little beggar! Not content with taking my room, aren't you? Want to capture me, too?"

The baby chuckled again at his words. Jock looked him over curiously. The rose-leaf skin, the soft golden rings, the violet blue eyes were disquietingly familiar. "Looks like the kid in the Gardens," he thought. He gave the child a toss or two, eliciting more delighted crows, then set him back on the big padded coverlid which had been spread over a rug on the floor for his comfort. He did not wish to be caught currying favor by making friends

with the baby. But the little one was not pleased to lose this new playmate. He begged again and when Jock picked up his bag and waved a good-by, his tiny lips quivered and he sent forth such a grieved wail that there seemed nothing to do but return and comfort him.

Jock gathered up some loose toys scattered about the coverlid and tried to interest him in these. He was half-kneeling, half-stooping in a most undignified attitude when a sound from the doorway made him turn hastily. Leaning heavily against the door frame, flushing, paling, with astonished terrified eyes stood Minette. She was wrapped in a soft floating honey-colored negligé and her shining hair hung in a loose braid. Her bare feet were thrust into silken slippers. She, too, was plainly—at home.

Jock got to his feet in a stupor of amazement. For terrible seconds they stared at each other dumb. He was the first to recover speech.

"You?—you?—you don't mean—surely you're not—oh, my God!" Realization had come. His face went ashen. He looked piteously from her to the child—from the child back to the mother. Minette stood frozen.

He could not believe it even after he knew. His mind fought against such ghastly punishment. It was not humanly possible! He must be dreaming. He stooped down and touched the infant to assure himself that he was awake. His face was so wild that Minette started forward fearing he meant to harm their child.

He raised again quickly divining her apprehensions.

Mr. Landis Sr. had had the nursery papered with a conventional paneling of life-sized Mother Goose figures in delicate pastel tints, and Minette's girlish figure in its honey-colored drapery seemed one with these. She looked a mere girl herself—a terrified trembling girl, with begging eyes like the child's. Her indomitable courage seemed to have deserted her. She tried to speak but her voice was thick and inarticulate.

Jock stared at her again, striving to collect his own thoughts. The room seemed to be revolving round him with this one golden figure standing out tragically from

the tripping procession on the walls. If they would only stand still long enough for him to think.

The child, which had stared from one to the other, began to whimper now for its mother. Minette came and picked it up, hushing it with dumb anguished caresses. And he watched them silently, still with an intolerable tightening of the throat. They were so beautiful and they were his. If only she had not plunged them into this impossible misery. His pain was fast merging into a cold rage.

"I might have known—when I picked a woman out of the gutter—she would serve me such a trick as this." His words were as deliberately stinging as a lash. His father at his worst had never equaled the sneering scorn of his look.

It had the effect of a physical blow upon Minette. Her face grew livid. The elfin figure that swayed slightly with the child's weight stiffened into rigid lines.

"Stop—do you hear, stop! You—you? Do you imagine for an instant that you have any right to reproach me? You did not take me out of the gutter. I was as self-respecting and as respected as you were, Jock Landis, if I was a factory girl. And I was as pure as the best. They used to laugh at me because I wouldn't listen to the low talk in some of the rooms. They said I was trying to play lady. And I had a right to play lady, my mother was a lady—she came from just as good a family as yours—if she was poor! And you—you would reproach me! You took my love, and my self-respect, and all my hopes of any future—and then you didn't care what became of me. Your pride wouldn't let you care. What about my pride? You thought you could pay me like a street woman. Pay! And I loved you so I forgave you. I thought I could live for the child—I thought—I guess maybe I always hoped I might hold you through the child—" She clutched it to her closer as if some one were offering to molest it. "But I wanted it anyway—I wanted that much of you if I could never be your wife. I was willing to take the disgrace—I was willing to slave for it—I thought I could do everything. Then when it came and I saw the other babies—and the

fathers, and how glad they were—I began to see things differently. I saw it wasn't just me that must bear the shame—he would have to bear it—he would be taunted maybe if folks found out, and it would be so easy anywhere I might go, for them to find out. Why, he didn't even have a name that belonged to him! And he was the most beautiful baby in the hospital. Not one of them had such a strong sturdy body or such beautiful curls—and there were young aristocrats there, I tell you. And I lay there and thought about it—and I knew the blame wasn't all mine. You were older than I, if you were a boy—and you had everything and I, nothing. But I didn't care so much for myself even then, Jock—but I just couldn't stand it for the baby—looking ahead and knowing how it would be. And he was your child as much as mine. He had a right to everything you had—and I never could give him half what you had if I worked my fingers off. I used to lie awake listening to his little soft breath and planning how I could make money." Her voice died away for a moment. She shifted wearily from one foot to the other to support the child's weight.

From its vantage in her arms, it had begun its cooing overtures to Jock once more. Neither he nor Minette heeded them. He was staring at them with a fixed hypnotic stare that noted nothing consciously. Yet his subconscious mind was photographing them indelibly. To the day of his death he remembered the most trifling details of their pathetic loveliness. He remembered the child's hands in fluttering incessant motion.

She continued more quietly.

"And when your father came—I thought at first he knew and had come from you—to do something—I was scared—I thought perhaps he wanted the child. When I found he didn't—that he just wanted a good time like you—I tried to get rid of him. Then I thought maybe if I got an influence over him he would do things for the child—"

Jock interrupted impatiently: "But I was willing to send you money—I told you—"

"Yes, yes, but that was before I realized—and some way I couldn't take anything more from you when you weren't willing to own him. You said that was impossible—your pride—you were keen enough about your pride but you never bothered about mine." The bitter note was creeping in once more.

"I never dreamed of his wanting to marry me—I never dreamed of marrying him after he asked me, till I thought that here was a way to give the child his rightful name. I didn't suppose he would—I didn't think it all out at once. I saw something in the paper about a rich man adopting a child and that that made it just the same as his own before the law. Then I was crazy—I'd have jumped into the bay gladly to give him his rights—and here was the chance to give him everything your son ought to have. Do you think I hesitated? I didn't care what you thought—what he—your father would think when he found out. I could face everything—everybody—it broke my heart to think what Veda and Dr. Bob and all of them would think, but I didn't care—I wouldn't let myself care because it was for my baby. And I'm not sorry!"

She faced him defiantly.

The anger had faded from Jock's face. There was only dazed misery. There were drops of moisture on his forehead. He took out his handkerchief and wiped them away. The self-assurance which had always been his was gone. He looked at the woman who should have been his wife, and he looked at his child, and he had not one word of excuse to offer. He had come to an impasse where the philosophy of his class and his own bringing up utterly failed. No one demanded that he pay—dollars and penitence were equally unavailing. There was nothing left but to be a man.

He straightened himself a little.

"I guess you've put it mild, Minette. I was a cur—a damned yellow cur—there's only one thing I can do for either of you and that's to clear out—and stay cleared! Good-by—I'll never trouble you any more—you needn't worry. But if Father should find out and—if you ever

need me—I'll send my address to Dr. Bob as soon as I get something to do—I—I!" He choked and started for the door.

Minette startled by this sudden change, held out her hand to stop him.

"Say you forgive me, Jock," she pleaded. "I wouldn't have done such a thing for myself—you believe that, Jock? And I didn't think about its turning you out of your home for always. I'd go myself—yet—if it wasn't for the baby—I couldn't leave him while he is so tiny, Jock—"

"Hush, Min-tin! For God's sake, hush!" He tried to break away but she clutched his sleeve.

"Take him in your arms, just once, Jock. He's your own child—please, just once."

He held out his arms blindly and she joyfully put the child into them.

"Look at him! Isn't he lovely? I want you to see his little back—it's for all the world like yours—here." She began to unfasten the elfin garments to display it.

He stopped her gently. "No—no, I can't—stand it! And I must go. Is Dad in the house?"

"I should say it was about time you were taking father into consideration!"

A sneering raucous voice answered for her.

Mr. Bracy Landis had eaten a leisurely breakfast, read his morning paper with unhurried enjoyment, and having donned his great coat and hat, had come softly up stairs to say good-by to his bride if she were awake.

He had not taken in the meaning of the scene before him. He did not fully comprehend when he saw the blank dismay his unexpected appearance occasioned. But he knew something was wrong and the Honorable Bracy's mind worked quickly when aroused.

"What's the matter? Have you two met before?" He looked from their betraying faces to the child.

The vexing association of her name with some incident in the past which had bothered him when Minette signed her name after their marriage, and which had returned once or twice since, was instantaneously cleared up.

"Minette Doty O'Reilly!" She had asked him to call

her Minna. He remembered at last where he had heard the Minette Doty part. The blood rushed to his face.

He whipped out his questions like shots from a revolver.

"Is that the Minette Doty you used to run with?" He pointed a gloved finger at Minette menacingly.

He did not wait for an answer—their attitude was answer enough.

"Is that brat yours?"

"It is." Jock had recovered himself by this time.

The malignity depicted in his father's face was the most fiendish expression Jock had ever seen on a human countenance. The veins were swelling and he was growing purple.

"Get out, you whelp—get out and stay out—and take that baggage and your brat with you!"

Before the last words were out the man was gasping. He staggered toward the door. Jack hastily gave the child to Minette and leaped to his father's assistance. He was just in time to save him from a fall.

It was three days before Bracy Landis recovered the power of speech sufficiently to give any further orders; his right side was permanently paralyzed.

Jock left the house as soon as the doctor arrived, and Capitol City, when his father was pronounced out of immediate danger.

For several days, Mr. Landis showed resentment at Minette's appearance in the room. She came as rarely as possible. But before the week was out he asked for her. He was not the man he once had been and she was his wife. He thought better of turning her out with Jock. Jock's name he would not permit to be mentioned.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ETERNAL SEPARATENESS OF THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

WHEN the Erb Act protagonists began to get together their scattered forces for a new campaign, Margaret DeWitt was confronted with the painful necessity of meeting Derrick daily. Her husband had not seen fit to inform either herself or Helen of his call. He preferred to let sleeping dogs lie. He firmly believed that marriage was the only thinkable life for a well-bred girl and he had seriously begun to fear that Helen would neither marry Derrick nor any one else, when her ill-starred engagement was so happily ended by Martin himself. He was too entirely pleased with her new prospects to tolerate any intrusion of the old romance. So Helen and her mother were going on with the preparations for her wedding unaware that Derrick had made any attempt at reconciliation.

The wedding had been set for late February at first, but as the time approached, the girl begged for a delay till April. She would be so hurried—winter was so cold—it was not a pleasant time for a honeymoon.

Margaret was relieved, and John Camberwell disapproving. He lectured Helen sharply on such trifling with the grave concerns of life. He sighed for the good old times when daughters were promptly rid of caprice by stern discipline. But this was unfortunately an age of individual liberty. The much tried man could not coerce either wife or daughter. The bridegroom was manifestly not pleased. He wrote voluble remonstrances, suggesting that she let the trousseau go hang, and that Cuba would be warm enough for a sybarite even in February. But Helen was too enchanted with the idea of delay to give it up.

Mr. Maldon was obliged to acquiesce with the best grace possible. As for John Camberwell, he had another rebel in his household to deal with. The revival of the Erb Act campaign infuriated him. He had gradually come to tolerate Margaret's office. Her salary had oiled the domestic wheels into much smoother running and while Margaret was often away from home on short trips about the state, there was nothing about her work to attract attention. But that this unsavory agitation should begin again with Margaret in the thick of it—just on the eve of Helen's wedding, too,—he simply could not tolerate it.

Margaret was sorrowfully firm. She would be a traitor to a great cause and faithless to her associates if she withdrew her support now with victory in sight. He would brand any public man as dishonorable who would do such a thing. The woman's loyalty and integrity should be as unimpeachable as the man's.

"But Helen's marriage! The Maldons were not accustomed to having their names mixed up in anything so vulgar. Young Maldon might consider this a sufficient reason for breaking off the engagement. Had she lost all sense of duty to her husband and child?" John Chamberwell was goaded into an undignified heat.

Margaret suppressed a rather bitter smile. She argued patiently that no man who really loved a girl would give her up for so trifling an annoyance. Further, he had not kept up with the woman movement if he did not realize that many of the greatest ladies of all countries were taking part in reform movements. The war had put every one to work from least to greatest, the social conventions of the New York of his youth had died a natural death a decade ago.

John Camberwell was not to be convinced. He admitted that the war had brought with it abnormal conditions and abnormal needs which had to be met by the sacrifice even of some womanly delicacy and ideals. But the war was a thing of the past. Of course women of fine family did some foolish and sensational things—they always had and always would—their wealth in a measure excused this. Though he himself did not approve of overlooking such departures

from correct conduct merely because the offender was of great social prominence. She knew that. If she was so keen about altruistic work why not turn to the church? St. Mary's needed workers in the guilds and in the Sunday School. But why in the name of common-sense, if she must ride a hobby, had she picked out such an obnoxious one? It made him cringe to have his wife's name connected with such a movement. He did not wish to be unjust, but he could not avoid the conviction at times that she had allied herself with this bill solely to annoy him. He wore such an expression of aggrieved exasperation that Margaret tried for the hundredth time to explain the piteous appeal the desperate lot of these degraded women made upon her. "The poor creatures fall so often when they are mere children, John, and the law has never done anything but punish and plunder them until the last few years when some of the states have begun to establish homes where the worst offenders can be sent and forced to lead a normal life and learn some trade for a period of years. And, John, brutish, licentious men would not have half the power to betray young girls if they could not dazzle them with gifts. And there would be little temptation to the underworld to debauch young boys if there were no safe profit to be obtained. We are trying to reduce temptation. The law never has tried to reach the men except to prevent white slavery. Surely in the average case the man is equally responsible and—"

"My dear, you will pardon my interrupting, but I do not care to be enlightened in such matters by my own wife. As I have often told you, a woman has not the judgment nor the knowledge of the world to fit her to cope with such questions. I regret deeply, Margaret, that you have grown too wise in your own conceit to permit yourself to be guided by me. If you are determined to go your own stubborn way regardless of how it humiliates me—regardless of your only living child's future, I have nothing more to say. You must blame yourself for any disagreeable consequences that may ensue. It is perhaps well that our son is not alive to share my humiliation."

Margaret's face flushed in keenest anger. "Leave

Donald out of this discussion, please! Have you so soon forgotten the vision of his last days? He gave his life cheerfully, nobly, to right a great wrong. He sweltered and shivered and went hungry—he endured everything without one word of complaint. And he was glad to do it! He said he would do it all over again if he had the chance just to make the world a little safer for those who were left. Do you imagine he would hold me back from doing my part? No! No! No! He was bigger than that. It is because of what he was, that I have held on and worked and hoped—and defied your nineteenth century prejudices, trying to help the world up a notch as he tried to help it. Don't you ever say such a thing to me again! You are wrong—I know you are wrong! Thank God I know it!"

Margaret emphasized this certainty by bursting into tears. Her nerves had been taut for weeks over Helen's affairs. The prospect of another struggle with her husband seemed too much. And to lug Donald in! His memory was the altar upon which she laid every sacrifice, every aspiration.

Her husband did not see it in this light.

"Calm yourself, my dear, there is no need for such excessive emotion. I will pass over the bad taste of your suggestion that I am unworthy of our son. I make allowance for your undue excitement. But you delude yourself if you imagine he would approve your quixotic crusade. A man fights for himself and his household. Donald paid the debt of our house to civilization. He would feel it to be in vain if he knew his mother were wading out in the muck under the mistaken impression that she was following his high example."

John Camberwell was prepared to go on indefinitely, having secured the floor. Margaret stopped him. "You may argue till doomsday, John, but I shall do everything in my power to further the Erb Bill. It is not a question of your conscience—or of Donald's, but of mine. I am just as much a human being as any man, I have just as definite a responsibility as any man, and I shall do what seems to me my duty. Even—if I make terrible mistakes."

This conjugal dispute had taken place immediately after

breakfast. Helen was sleeping late after a dance in spite of her father's liking to have her at the breakfast table. He was inclined to be lenient with her in small things now that she was so soon to leave the parental roof. Margaret faced her husband hotly defiant. Her tear-wet eyes were very bright. Her tear-stained cheeks were flushed. She did not look her years and she came near being handsome. John Camberwell never failed to notice her appearance. He found it to a certain extent compensatory now for her outrageous notions.

Margaret was not similarly mollified in looking at her spouse. He was immaculate—he was not ill-looking but his eyes were covetous of her and his mouth revealed the combination of timidity and obstinacy which had bruised all her days with him. He was not strong enough to be a leader among men, but he was strong enough to hamper and harass his wife.

She had a busy nagging day ahead. It was nine-thirty. She must do her ordering, arrange with Olga for the day's meals, leave checks for the milk man, the egg man, the laundress. She must not forget to remind Helen of the dressmaker's appointment at four. John had asked her to lay out his suit for the cleaner's. She had promised to telephone to two of the other members of her board concerning a visit of inspection at the reform school. She was due at an important committee meeting for the Erb campaign at Derrick's office at eleven. Would John never quit and go?"

Possibly some mental telepathy made him look at his watch.

"I can not spare any more time for this unprofitable discussion now," he said patronizingly. "I trust when you have had time to think it over you will be more amenable." He considered a moment before administering his customary parting kiss. But her tears and her flush had softened his choler. He kissed her cheek almost warmly.

Margaret looked after his retreating figure with a peculiar expression of distaste. An instant later she shrugged her shoulders and set briskly about the morning's tasks. If Helen had been there she would have interpreted the shrug

in the light of long experience. "Queer old world, Mummy?"

It surely was a queer old world. Margaret fought hard to convince herself that it was not an impossible world.

Derrick had met her more than half way in ignoring the embarrassment of resuming their old intimate relations in their work for the cause. He wondered if she knew of his visit and its motive. He had resigned himself to the inevitable but he found Margaret's warm friendliness comforting. Helen always seemed close at hand when he was with her mother. Further, he was lonely with such a wrenching loneliness as he had never known in all his life before.

The governor had called a fifteen days' session, which had but just assembled and organized. They had been working hard since Dr. Bob had given them the governor's tip. All that literature, and *The Republican's* unflagging advocacy, and incessant lobbying, and personal influence could do, was being done. And Margaret had secured the promise of one new vote for the measure from one of the legislators who had a brother on her board. He knew of her faithfulness and untiring work and had been won. "I don't care if it is darn fool nonsense—that little woman has earned the right to have it tried out fair and square. I'm going to vote for it." The struggle now was to hold all the votes they had swung before.

Two other things also were in their favor. Mr. Landis was physically disabled, and too much distracted with his domestic misfortunes to take any further interest in fighting the measure. And the increasing unrest and anxiety among all classes over the U. X. W. movements which seemed to be threatening a new social upheaval, distracted the popular attention. There was but little organized opposition except from the sporting world and the prostitutes themselves.

It seemed too good to be true. "I'm morally sure they have something up their sleeves!" mourned Margaret. "I never in my life had anything I wanted as much as this, come easy."

"We must act as if they did—I have noticed that the im-

possible is always probable in politics—but I don't believe they have any new cards. If they haven't, we've got it cinched!" Derrick said this soberly. A year before he would have chanted a paean of victory. "Amen!" said Dr. Bob. "It may not work—it undoubtedly will not do all we hope, but praise the Lord it's an entering wedge. Century after century said the liquor traffic could not be curbed, and it has been. Generation after generation has taught the nasty creed that man is innately licentious and polygamous. Maybe he is, but he needn't be! And if he elects to be, he is just as much a menace to society as the man who steals a hundred dollars. Brand him as you do the woman, and you will be amazed to find how large a proportion of red-blooded men will manage to be decent."

"Which makes one wonder," said Margaret thoughtfully, "why mankind hesitates so long before trying out a reform. If it doesn't work you can always go back to the old way of doing."

"Not always," said Derrick. "Whether you accomplish what you are after or not, you invariably modify public opinion to some extent. Often you plant the seed which flowers generations later. Men shrink from loosing any new force for they never know what momentum it may attain, or what it may crush, in its path. Hence this exaggerated conservatism which every reform has to batter down." Derrick spoke with the new gravity which hurt Margaret. He had not lost his old enthusiasm, but his very enthusiasm had aged.

"There is more in it than that," added the doctor. "Whenever you break down any established custom or precedent, however hampering or evil it may be, you are likely to have an interim of license before the new system gets into working order. Which gives its enemies an excuse for calling it a failure before it is established."

"Like the debris cleaning house stirs up. There are awful hours of chaos before your home emerges sweet and wholesome. By the way, where's Veda to-day?"

"Don't know unless there's been more trouble down at the works."

"Hardly, I think—Ivan skipped you know."

"Good riddance—hope he'll never come back. Hardwick would be a much more suitable match for our Veda," said the doctor.

"Hardwick?" echoed Derrick.

"Yes, our cynical friend, Garth Harwick, who will never know he is in love unless somebody tells him."

"I think you can be depended upon to undertake the mission, Doc," retorted Martin drily. He had not quite forgiven the doctor for his futilely humiliating call.

Margaret glanced up quickly at his tone. Dr. Bob had never mentioned his efforts to bring Helen and Derrick together. But Derrick was surely referring to something. The men saw her curiosity was roused.

"Going far, Margaret? Can I give you a lift in the machine?"

"No, thank you, I am to meet Helen at the United." She glanced up guiltily. She had been careful not to mention Helen before Derrick. He was idly turning some papers and did not seem to have heard.

When they were once outside she started to ask him if he had ever talked to Derrick about Helen, but thought better of it.

Her mind slipped from Helen to Veda and to her ill considered betrothal to Ivan.

"Bob," she said, "why do the fates play such tricks in bringing the wrong people together when it is such a vital matter for the race as well as the individual?"

"Well," replied the doctor quizzically, "the doctrine of free will may have to be vindicated. The man must have the right to elect evil if he wishes—and you wouldn't deny the woman the same privilege, would you?"

Then seeing the somber look in her eyes, he said more seriously:

"Sometimes I think it is because if any one relation in life were too perfect, it would dwarf all the others. A perfectly happy married pair are the most profoundly selfish beings on the face of the earth usually. Seems to limit their sympathies."

"Perhaps," returned Margaret, tucking up a loose end of her veil carefully, "possibly, it is just to maintain the

inevitable separateness of the man and the woman so there should not be too close a union. But Veda and my Helen—oh, Bob, why must these things be?"

. . . . .

The glory of the morning sun seeped through the clouded glass dome of the little Greek church and lent something of its radiance to the sleek dark heads and ruddy faces of the men congregated beneath it. It kindled into life the muddy colors of the crudely painted icons on the iconostasis. It flashed from the myriad crystals of the lamps. It pierced the interstices of fretted brass in the hanging censers. It poured in lavish streams through the bright panes of the windows. The priest's golden vestments irradiated shimmering tremulous flashes as he moved. The scent of incense and flowers hung heavy in the air.

Veda standing wrapped in the woman's corner fairly laved herself in a tide of recollection. She was a child again at her mother's side with the old nurse a pace behind. The little brown taper she lighted was held in the childish hand of her childish self. She had been wont to hold it so, reverently—taking pride that it should be as steady as any of her elders. She bowed and crossed herself as under the eye of that mother.

This little corner of the cheap little church in America was all that was left of the atmosphere of her home and her native land—this and Ivan. The little church was almost a caricature of the great church in Moscow. The worshipers showed the swarthy skin and melancholy dark eyes of the Greek, instead of the milder, stolid physiognomy of the Slav. She and Ivan were the only Russians among its communicants. To her it was not the marvel it was to others, that Ivan still superimposed the observances of the church upon his anarchistic atheism. Habit was stronger than intellectual belief. Habit in the Slav not only binds, it fetters. Veda herself felt the bonds. The little church was movingly reminiscent of home. She was too modern to be devout but she had the deep-rooted fatalistic religious instinct of the Slav. Deity was authority, remote, eternal, and inescapable. Her sense of God was not unlike that

of the Puritan, but the resemblance ended here. Life so profoundly serious to him, to her was a trust to be made beautiful and joyous. Her whole duty as she saw it was to ameliorate the human lot. She had never consciously thought this out; she had been thrust into it by her racial inheritance and the tragedy of her own experience.

For the moment this Sabbath morning, the burdens of her life had been cast aside. The flooding effulgence of the sunlight seemed to have penetrated every moldy corner of her soul and to be purifying it. She felt a strange joyous exaltation. Her spirit seemed to be lifted on the rhythmic plaintive soaring of the chant. A little child beside her tucked a moist hand into hers and crowded close against her. The women and children about her kept up a restless subdued movement. Babies in their little go-carts munched crackers contentedly. Other babies nestled warmly against maternal breasts. A father here and there kept a protecting oversight of his own. The crowding men, washed, and shaven, and adorned, fit for the sight of God and their fellow men, the singers so earnest and absorbed—everywhere there seemed a sense of well-being—a heavenly peace brooding for a moment among the troublous affairs of men.

She did not realize that she had brought the germ of her deep content with her that morning—that she had been nursing it into beautiful sturdy promise in her heart ever since her interview with Garth Hardwick.

Hardwick had not taken back one word of his careless speech about Minette. He had long since forgotten that he ever made such an idly mischievous remark. But he had furnished Veda with a new key to interpret his meanings. Idle speeches were not to be counted against his years of performance. And Veda loved him with a self-sacrificing absorption that demanded nothing yet feasted upon the suppressed tenderness of his tones and glance.

She was not thinking of any future to-day—she was living in the past, in the warm affections that had guarded her youth. But the spark that made these live again so vividly was the fire of love. She dared to look back now because of life's promise ahead.

The service was nearly over. The little church was becoming uncomfortably crowded as late comers edged in. Veda, blissfully following the service with that singing joy in her heart, became gradually aware that something was drawing her eyes toward a group of men near the farther wall. There had been some stir there a moment earlier. She had glanced in that direction, seeing nothing but a movement among the men as if they were making place for new arrivals. Presently, she seemed to feel eyes fixed upon her. Lifting hers, their gaze was caught by Ivan Lapovich's magnetic black ones—caught and held as in a vice. He appeared unkempt among the sleekly shaven men about him. He had a sulky harried look. He made a slight motion with his hand toward the woman's room just behind her. She supposed he wished to meet her there after the service.

The shock of his presence was paralyzing for a moment. She had believed him safely away from Capitol City. From what Hardwick had said, she had inferred that the sabotage at the L. and A. had been brought close enough home to Ivan to warrant his arrest. Why had he been so rash as to come back? Perhaps, he did not know he was suspected. She must warn him. The mere thought of talking to him—of standing near him was unpleasant to her, yet her first impulse was to save him. She knew with absolute certainty that he was about to make some sort of appeal to her affection.

The remaining moments of the service dragged intolerably. Ivan disappeared from his place soon after his signal to her. Veda lingered, helping some of the women she knew with their children's wraps. One or two of the young men claimed her attention for a word. When the congregation had begun to melt away she glanced into the room behind her. He was not visible. A little later one of the small boys who served as acolytes came and whispered that the priest wished to speak to her.

Ivan had evidently not trusted to his signal alone. Father Kopolous told her that some one wished to speak with her after all had gone. She might talk with him for a moment to account for her lingering. He addressed her

gravely about trivial things until the last worshiper had filed out. Then Ivan suddenly reappeared and beckoned her toward the inner room. The priest smilingly raised his hand in benediction and went to fasten the main door of the church.

The benediction brought no peace to Veda. She was beset with apprehensions, as to Ivan's safety and his errand with her. Closer view did not improve his appearance. He was worse than unkempt—he looked wolfish.

Life for the past ten days had not moved as his rainbow-hued schedule had promised. He had been infuriated at having to sneak away from Capitol City in the first place. It made him out a bungler. He lost caste with his mates for his lack of adroitness. Nothing was more essential to the movement than a mysterious sureness in evading detection. This was necessary to inspire confidence. The rank and file of their adherents were not of a caliber to court martyrdom—there must be as little as possible to suggest even a temporary avenging nemesis. Their sabotage was to be mysteriously terrifying wool for romance and exciting tales of aristocrats confounded and whimpering at the mercy of the unknown.

Instead of posing as a hero as he had confidently expected, he had been playing the ignominious role of a hunted criminal. All owing to Hardwick's relentless energy. Ivan had his number. He boasted this with an oath before he had half told his errand to Veda. Jenkins had sought Ivan out and had warned him as Hardwick had promised her. Ivan had acquiesced to throw the detective off the scent, had taken the train for Chicago and hidden himself among some of the humbler initiated there for days. Believing he had the spies eluded, he had doubled back, coming the last hundred miles by machine. He had but just arrived and had slipped boldly into the church because a friend had told him his girl was there. She was the first person he wanted to see.

He gave her these facts with so much camouflage that she would never have guessed all they meant, but for her previous knowledge of what had happened.

Ivan knew nothing of Hardwick's promise to her. He

believed the boss's agent had warned instead of nabbing him, because the boss was afraid to arrest him and bring him back to Capitol City for trial. But he was not unmindful that the boss's interest in Veda might be turned to account. That was part of the business he hoped to transact to-day. As his wife she could pretty nearly guarantee him immunity, till they could pull off their coup. He had never concerned himself greatly about her anger and repudiation of their tie. He had expected to be amply able to handle that himself when the U. X. W. were once in power as they expected to be before many weeks. But the situation was more exigent now and he needed her influence.

He had been in the church much longer than Veda was aware, watching her, planning craftily how he could win her to his scheme of immediate marriage. The priest was an old friend of his. He had enlisted his sympathies with a plausibly broken story of the boss's persuading her to break her sacred betrothal. He would tell him everything later. He told him he was in danger now on a false charge trumped up by Hardwick. He must be married and take Veda away with him before the L. and A. knew of his presence. Ivan believed he could frighten Veda into believing that his safety depended upon her. His vanity had never admitted that she no longer loved him.

He gripped her hands in his while he told his story hurriedly with furtive glances toward the door into the church, where they could hear the priest moving about quietly. His boldness was assumed. He was in secret terror of being arrested before he could make her his shield.

She tried to pull away. But he was terribly strong with an uncanny magnetism in his touch. He called her by the little Russian pet names which had been dear to her during his first zealous tenderness.

"My little one, you too have not turned against me! It is impossible that you should not forgive me for a single offense. You who have room in your heart for the dirtiest brat in the street. Come, girl, give me a kiss and say you forgive me. You could feel my heart beating madly if you would not strain away so."

His voice was rich with feeling. It moved her. She no longer loved him but he was her countryman. He was turning to her in his peril. The old intimate relation seemed to hold her. But the stale odor from his clothing assailed her nostrils. He had been in a cheap lodging house, the woolen cloth reeked with rank tobacco and garlic. Mingling with this was a pungent unwashed animal odor. It nauseated her. She struggled once more to pull away. But he clung to her hands, pleading desperately.

Father Kopolous out in the church heard and felt that the time had come to use his influence with this unruly daughter of the church. It was not well that she should set aside her betrothal lightly. It was the office of the church to hold its members to a scrupulous fulfillment of their obligations. Besides, Ivan was his friend. If he cared little for religion, he at least had never repudiated his church openly. Father Kopolous regretted his connection with the new movement but he scarcely knew enough of the inner workings of the organization to be deeply concerned.

As to Veda's feelings. Like many other good men, he deemed the woman's emotions of little concern. If she were well-fed and clothed and kindly treated, the coming of the first baby could be depended upon to settle her down into docile wifehood. He would have cried out in horror at a single illegal violation of this girl's womanhood. But for a continuous legal violation of her body and her personality he would have no word of censure. It did not even occur to him that to take this high-minded useful woman and submit her to the uses and caprices of a sensuous domineering man such as he knew Ivan to be, would soil and stunt her spirit as inevitably as prostitution itself.

Father Kopolous was merely reasoning that Veda wedded to Ivan might curb the latter's disquieting anarchistic tendencies and raise up a lusty brood of sons and daughters to the church, and that this was her proper sphere. Not only his church but all his inherited traditions taught this. The woman, being by nature inferior, could not spend herself to better purpose than in uplifting and comforting her

husband. Neither the woman's convictions nor her emotions were worthy of consideration in such a case.

He approached her with that air of suave authority which is the Americanized version of the old world priestly power.

"You should listen, daughter. A troth is not to be broken for mere caprice. He is offering you the most wonderful opportunity that can come to a woman—the chance to help a strong man. You must not let your ambitions betray your duty. The boss is not for such as you—a working girl. Do not flatter yourself with the idea that he wants to marry you. This is your man. Listen to him. I can call Sophia and my son as witnesses and marry you immediately. Ivan says he has a friend in the clerk's office who will issue the license later and date the time back before the ceremony."

The priest talked with assurance—a convincing stream of words that made her afraid while it angered her. She told herself she did not dream of marrying Hardwick yet such suggestions as these chilled her. Had the fates set her in a bog from which she was powerless to extricate herself? Was it her duty to marry Ivan and drag out a dreary existence trying to save him from his lawless ambitions? For a moment her lips quivered weakly. Then her normal fearless coolness asserted itself.

"You do not understand, Father Kopolous. I could not protect Ivan long if I did marry him. All he needs to do to protect himself is to leave town for a while and stop this sabotage. It is wicked, this bolshevism—I will marry no man who tries to bring such ruin on this beautiful country. I know all its ways—thieving, murdering, violating women, tearing the golden vessels from the altars! I have seen these things with my own eyes! You surely do not know—you cannot understand what this movement means or you would not urge me to have any part with a man who means to dishonor religion—who—"

Ivan had listened to this outburst with growing rage. He stopped further revelations now with a muscular hand clapped over her mouth.

But the priest had heard enough to disturb his smug assurance. Sabotage? He had not approved of the de-

struction at the L. and A. He had not known that Ivan was connected with that. He scrutinized him gravely. The younger man was beside himself. Veda was struggling vainly to release herself and her lover's gaze was more malevolent than loving.

After a moment's hesitation the priest interfered. "Hold, I'll have no violence in God's church." He seized him by the shoulder and gave a vigorous jerk that brought Ivan to his senses. "Let her go, I say. I'll not marry you till this matter is cleared up. You'll not use the church to cover up your dirty tricks—if that's what you're up to."

Ivan regarded him sullenly. He did not attempt to deny anything. Marriage was out of the question that day—so much was plain. There was nothing to do but clear out as speedily and quietly as possible. He would get satisfaction for this humiliation some day or— His upper lip drew back in a snarl. He would have struck Veda down in his rage but for the presence of the priest.

"You'll pay for this, girl—good and plenty—I promise you. And if I ever hear of your monkeying round with the boss—I'll kill you both—like rats!"

He did not deign to waste invective on the priest. Dashing past them, he ran out into the church and disappeared through the side door. The watching friend in the machine cranked the car and they were off.

Ivan had no intention of languishing in jail when the Universal Strike started.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE UNIVERSAL STRIKE

MRS. SCHMIDT, domestic and self-effacing, would have been dumb with surprise had she been told that she had been an important factor in making history in this particular year. When she eased her troubled mind to Veda that wintry night, she started a little ball rolling which had important governmental results. She betrayed the new method of the movement to the powers that be and desire to continue to be.

The braggadocio type of strike in which a vast organization undulated its sinuous length across a continent and shook its rattling threats at a mighty nation was a thing of the past. In its place after a period of comparative quiet following the readjustments of the war, a new dragon had been bred. The government knew this spawn was growing. "Everybody" knew and said they knew the time was coming when some power must slay the monster. Everybody acknowledged this and nobody actually believed it. The people were too comfortable to risk a revolution—all the people were too comfortable.

This latent apprehension was more potent than any sauce to make their meals appetizing. It made their beds seem all the softer. It made their homes seem all the more preciously their own because this specter stalked outside. Safely outside! It furnished the very element of uncertainty and romance the distraction-loving Americans needed to keep from being bored with too much good. All this had gone on for many months—months running into years. And now one insignificant woman had whispered in strict confidence to another insignificant woman that the developing monster was actually moving out of its lair in search of prey.

The people did not hear this news. The newspapers did

not get it. Garth Hardwick communicated it personally to the nearest government secret service representative, for this was not news to be written or telegraphed except in code. Two hours later Washington had it. Twenty-four hours later every secret service agency in the country had it with as much detail of the movement's local activities as Garth Hardwick had been able to furnish.

Two days later a cabinet meeting discussed the proposed strike with such data as the service had been able to uncover as to its precise time and exact strength. How far would it reach? How many industries would be involved? How nearly universal was it possible for this universal strike to be? Agents and detectives were unable to secure facts. The movement had learned how to use another new weapon besides secrecy, artifice. In so general a conspiracy it was hardly humanly possible to prevent some leaks. To render these innocuous, the U. X. W. deliberately spread numerous false and conflicting rumors, so that no confidence should be placed in any report.

They were learning the game, these new leaders of the movement. The administration was at a loss how to proceed. The heads of industry increased their night watchmen and their detective forces. In spite of these precautions, sabotage was springing up all over the country. Mysterious explosions occurred. Fires burned whole business blocks and threatened great cities. The days of the German spy destruction seemed about to return.

The people began to haunt the bulletin boards restlessly as in war-time. They jumped nervously at any sudden noise. They locked their doors and windows at night more securely. Certain provident ones laid in supplies of food and coal lest there should be a shortage. Few knew exactly what to fear but fear was in the air at last—uncomfortable harassing fear.

Governor Tommy Gregg kept in touch with everything Hardwick could learn and told Hardwick all the flotsam of information the police had to offer. Veda tried to draw out more definite information from Mrs. Schmidt. But if she knew more than she had already betrayed, she had grown cautious. She tried to retract her previous tale,

saying Carl had just been joshing her and she had taken it in earnest. Governor Gregg did not take much stock in the retraction.

"The sabotage is proved. It is also proof that more deviltry is fomenting. I believe the old woman told the truth and I mean to be ready."

The governor racked his brains for some excuse to bring the extremely easy going national guard to some degree of preparedness without exciting suspicion. He got up a big military parade and arranged to borrow three companies of regulars from the nearest post. He had new arms and uniforms issued, and let it be known that he wished the guard to make as good a showing as the regulars. The officers and men grumbled prodigiously at a two weeks' notice of such an event. But they sweated through nightly drills in an effort to comply.

Some of the officers were surprised and delighted with the unexpected proficiency of many of the working men in the ranks. Also at the number of new men who came flocking in for the parade.

"Seem to think coming into the Guard is like joining a club. The fools don't realize that once in they'll have to stick till their term of enlistment is over," said one captain.

"If it's the parade that's drawing them—they're the bigger fools. Nobody can lick them into shape in time for that."

"That is what I don't get! A lot of 'em seem to be already licked. Five of the men who came into my company last week drill better than lots of the old men. Where'd they get it?"

"Oh, in the schools, maybe. Possibly some are war veterans."

"They're not young enough for school boys. And the old soldiers would be stiff and awkward after several years in other occupations. There's something queer about it all."

"Nonsense, you've got the jim jams over this bolshevist scare. Don't get to seeing things, man!" his friend counselled airily.

Garth Hardwick wondered if he were seeing things. He did not feel quite sure of his own mental sanity since everything in Veda's neighborhood had become touched with rose color. Some man had once tried to tell him that love was merely a matter of vibration. He was not interested in the nature of this phenomenon. He was too painfully aware that what had always been an irrelevant objective fact had suddenly become a pertinent subjective force not to be ignored by the most cynical.

He had not the face to tell himself he was not in love, in spite of Dr. Bob's theory as to his unconsciousness of his malady. It was a malady with all the stimulating effects of opium. In spite of the troubles at the L. and A. and his disgust at his own short-sightedness, he kept having the most delightful visions. They were rather nebulous as yet, consisting largely of Veda and more Veda. And they were interposed with nightmares of doubt.

After all he had no more definite assurance than idle gossip that she had broken her engagement to Ivan. He remembered with a growing discomfort that she had been concerned about his safety. Word had come to him through Jenkins of Ivan's flying visit and his appearance in the Greek church. The faithful Jenkins knew nothing of the harrowing interview in the inner room. Hardwick's first thought had been to wonder if Ivan had seen Veda. He saw but little of her himself these days. Even had he not been harassed with anxieties and overwork, it would have been unwise to be seeking her out in this atmosphere of suspicion and unrest. Veda would have lost influence among her mates at the slightest hint of any special friendship with him. The old coupling of their names at L. and A. had largely ceased. She manifestly avoided encounters with him, but there was a certain flash of understanding in her eyes when they met accidentally which robbed her aloofness of any sting.

The factory was under way again and apparently running smoothly. But with daily reports of vandalism coming in from all over the country, he did not flatter himself that the L. and A. would escape long. He chose to pretend that his employees were loyal. With Mr. Landis flat on

his back he had the chief responsibility of directing the company's affairs and its policy. The days slipped by uneventfully till the morning of March thirtieth dawned. Then the awaited blow fell.

When certain factory whistles blew at six A. M. for the change of shifts many unforeseen things happened at Capitol City and elsewhere. The worst of the situation being that no one knew whether this community was an isolated victim or whether this was indeed the great strike they had been dreading.

The telegraph offices discovered something amiss first. Some accident had happened to the wires. Operators telephoned distractedly to their superiors. Superiors got grumbly out of bed and sped down town in their machines while operators tried to get telephone communication with the next station on the lines in vain. All wires were cut running out of Capitol City. Local telephone exchanges had not been tampered with apparently.

They were fast discovering other phenomena. The six o'clock Overland thundering into the station exactly on time did not proceed on its way. Its crew banked its fires to burn out harmlessly and disappeared, saying nothing. Passengers peering out of berth windows or walking up and down the platform for exercise and amusement became suddenly aware of something uncannily quiet. Why did not the train pull out? The conductors were not in sight. Presently a porter was heard arguing with the pullman conductor. "Ah doan want my head taken off—I got a wife and four kids at Pueblo! How come I got to tell 'em?"

A moment later he appeared in the aisle of the forward pullman. "You alls might as well git your things together and go up-town—this train ain't going no further to-day."

He was besieged with questions and imprecations.

"Who said so?" "What was the matter?" "What sort of a damned outrage was this any way?"

The porter did not know. He knew only that the train crew had deserted in response to a mysterious threat that if they pulled No. 4 out of Capitol City—they would never

see another morning dawn. He knew nothing more except that his conductor had told him he might go up town and wait for further orders, leaving an address where he could be reached promptly. The conductor thought something out of the ordinary had happened but had no idea what was up. The office could not get headquarters anywhere because the wires were cut.

It was all very strange and disquieting. After much arguing and many attempts to extract some sort of information or surmise from the equally mystified office and baggage room force at the station, the passengers departed on foot to seek food and shelter, having already ascertained that no breakfast awaited in the diners. Not a street car was running—not a taxi was to be seen on the streets.

It was a strange straggling procession. One of the porters led, making extra tips carrying women's bags in addition to his own. A delicate young mother in blue, one child in her arms, another complaining mite of three hanging to her skirts and clasping firmly a cotton-wool monkey, followed close. An old lady tottered along assisted by a dapper salesman from an eastern shoe house. He sported a purple tie and elk seals and his well-manicured hand, with its showy diamond, looked oddly out of place clutching the home-made wooden cage containing the old lady's parrot. She held tightly to a fast diminishing bag of doughnuts baked for her grand-children. Some hungry little ones on the pullman crying for breakfast had received a goodly share of them.

No one locked up the coaches. A few moments after the last passenger had left, a group of urchins hanging about the station, poured through them, playing leap frog over the backs of the upholstered seats, filling their pockets with the cakes of soap from the dressing rooms, knotting the towels into balls and pelting each other with them. Nobody noticed or stopped them. Some strange hideous paralysis had seized upon every one.

As the morning advanced private cars and many drays and delivery wagons crowded the thoroughfares. Toward noon the drays and trucks began to thin out. Warnings

were reaching their drivers that they would conserve their health and future usefulness by going home and laying off their jobs till further notice.

At one o'clock five masked men in old army khaki appeared in the main telephone exchange and ordered everybody out and home. They would be notified when their services were required again. Some of the girls in their hurry and fright, were dropping or forgetting their small possessions. One of the masked officials politely picked up a pair of gloves and restored them to their owner. To another he suggested taking her box of chocolates. "They might be stale before you return here, Miss."

By this time the streets were a seething mass of men and women with a sprinkling of school children. The school houses were cold. Each janitor had found a warning notice posted on the outer door when he returned from breakfast bidding him put out the fires, go home and stay there, if he knew what was good for his health. Some of the more courageous lingered long enough to inform the principal or one or more of the teachers. Others had gone home and safely telephoned their news. One or two thoughtfully called up the police. Impromptu meetings were held by the teachers and principals and the school board appealed to for instructions. It was deemed best to obey this mysterious edict temporarily lest they expose the children and themselves to bombs or some other devilish violence.

The whole city made gruesome holiday, as they might following a cyclone or some great disaster.

Governor Gregg set himself to his task. He spent the greater part of the day in conference with the mayor, the chief of police, and the colonel of the National Guard regiment of the city. By three in the afternoon they were sending out armed machines to seek news in neighboring towns. Two mailplanes slipped quietly out from the government hangar. When they flew over the adjoining mountains they were fired on repeatedly. One was so crippled it had to return. The other escaped.

One of the governor's first acts was to set a guard over the wireless station. Strangely enough the leaders of the

movement had been caught napping here, the apparatus had not been tampered with and the regular operator was working disgustedly trying to get Denver, serenely unconscious of what was going on all about him. The patrolling soldiers were not molested during the day. But that night after the guard had been tripled by the governor's orders, and blazing bonfires built in a wide circle round the wireless plant to take the place of the city's defunct electric lights, machine gun bullets began to splatter in the neighborhood. The bonfires were speedily extinguished. Toward morning a soldier was caught trying to put one of the instruments out of commission. He was one of the new guardsmen who had learned his manual of arms with such astonishing speed. The guard at the station was replaced by regulars from the post, picked men whom the commandant could depend upon.

But the operator found the air strangely still. He picked up a message from a remote station on the Great Lakes shortly before noon. "What in hell has happened to everybody!" it read. This was enlightening but not encouraging. It sounded as if the movement were general. It sounded like revolution!

Two hours later San Francisco demanded to know what was up. Their instruments had been damaged but not seriously. The whole city was in the grip of something—nobody knew exactly what. There was no violence, but everything was stopped. The labor unions knew nothing about it. The labor leaders accused the U. X. W. promptly. Troops from the Presidio were patrolling the streets keeping order. Lights were out—street cars not running—the water works were operated and guarded by soldiers. All business was at a standstill and the people were terrified. Only the presence of troops prevented a panic.

Capitol City had no news from the Atlantic seaboard till midnight. The movement had been methodically thorough there in seizing or crippling the wireless. The whole coast was in the throes of something—strike or revolution, nobody knew what as yet. Fortunately, the poison did not seem to have spread among the troops much, although some of the national guard regiments had already discovered

traitors in their midst. New York was in darkness but thoroughly patrolled by government forces. So far there was little violence though there had been a great deal of looting early in the day before the patrols were posted. Now the soldiers were ordered to shoot all offenders at sight. All trains had been stopped at the first station they reached after six A. M. Mail planes were being fired upon from lonely regions.

The state authorities had had no word of suggestion or command from Washington. Governor Gregg shook his head and set his jaw a notch tighter. The capitol was heavily guarded, lit with tallow candles, and thronged with prominent citizens eager to offer suggestions or to glean some reassurance from the governor's resolute front. Many of these were pessimistic over the president's silence.

"Don't you worry about the president!" the governor protested. "The scabs have probably taken extra pains to spike every wireless anywhere near Washington, but I'll bet the president's laying plans that will begin to tell inside of twenty-four hours. The only thing we have to fear is being scared into a panic. Go home and keep your courage up—conserve your food supply, and be ready to respond the minute you're called on for service. I propose to have this town running in a few days if we have to carry on every darned industry with a guard. They're a mere handful compared with the loyal citizens, I tell you—a mere handful!" The governor brought his ponderous fist down with a crash on his mahogany desk. "Don't act like skinned rats before you're hurt!"

Most of the prominent citizens went home in groups picking their way cautiously along the dark streets. The throng in the governor's office thinned down to certain officials and Derrick Martin and Garth Hardwick.

Gregg turned to the latter after watching the door close behind a timorous small manufacturer who feared his plant would be wrecked and had been clamoring for a special guard.

"Hardwick, I'm glad we have a few sports like yourself in the business game. That man's perfectly able-bodied. He has two grown sons who were in France and

certainly know how to handle a rifle and machine gun. He surely must have one or two employees he can trust—this isn't a general labor movement. What's to hinder his guarding his own factory? I offered to equip him with arms and ammunition. The cowards want to be taken care of like babies. They don't give a hang for the state till they or their interests are menaced, then they howl about the state's duty to protect them. Who do they think makes the state anyhow?"

Hardwick smiled.

The governor hadn't left the capitol since six-fifteen that morning. He had gulped down coffee and odds and ends of food while he arranged and harangued. Not the least of his tasks was to rescue public confidence from this numbing nameless fear.

Hardwick made his report.

"I have the factory guarded and from three to four spies in each of the dormitories. We have already arrested ten men according to your orders—sent them up to the post under guard before their comrades got wise. Most of the ones we suspect to be leaders were gone before dawn. Schmidt was not home last night at all. His wife let it out to one of the girls. Most of them evidently worked all night getting their warnings posted and telegraphing or telephoning. The operators say the lines were kept hot with all sorts of disguised messages. Many of these were sent from night cafés or public booths in hotels, and from the stations. Thanks to the warning of our sabotage scare, we know pretty well who is to be trusted in our force. I believe I have a line on the ones who can be intimidated by the revolutionists, as well as the doubtful brothers. At any rate I think we can take care of ourselves—safety, food, and heat, and possibly we may be able to help out a little elsewhere if needed. I always keep the dormitory store rooms full up. And our coal bunkers were recently refilled. We could take care of a hundred from the poorer homes—women and children that is—don't care to risk bringing unknown men into the L. and A. grounds."

Hardwick manifested a pardonable pride in this preparedness.

The governor thanked him warmly. It was good to have an occasional offer of aid after many clamorous demands for help.

"The thing I want most is to borrow you and as many electricians as you can furnish to-morrow night. The light plant is but slightly damaged. Foster and his force of volunteer engineers expect to have it going by nine in the morning. About half the men are known to be trustworthy, the head of the local unions assures me—I tell you the unions are coming to the front nobly—but they need some one who isn't afraid and understands his business to stand by. Of course I'll guard it heavily, but they might try to rush it or think up some subtle devilry we're not prepared for. You've been on the front—you wouldn't lose your head in an emergency. Have you any one who could take your place at the works for a couple of nights? If you don't try to start up, I don't think they'll bother you there at present."

So they planned and contrived as the night wore on.

Derrick undertook a still more dangerous task—to do some airplane scouting and carry messages over the state. Martin had enjoyed occasional flights since his service with the Royal British. Gregg promised him a new plane which the state had but fairly tried out. He accepted the mission with more eagerness than he had shown about anything since his rupture with Helen De Witt. He was not to set out till darkness fell the following evening. The governor had few high-powered planes to risk, and most of the privately owned air craft were light and often second rate. His excellency was determined to make every move count.

But the night was not destined to pass in unmolested planning. The mysterious revolutionists who had done so much without exposing themselves to serious hazard, were growing bolder. They did not like the look of the activity at the capitol. The dispersing citizens were allowed to go home without interference. The fewer they had to deal with the better. The governor had been right when he described the revolutionists as a mere handful. They knew their numerical weakness and had no intention of doing

any more open fighting than was necessary. Further, recruits had not flocked to their standard as they had hoped, once the strike was on. Some hundreds of working men whom they had previously spotted as being easy converts had been approached during the day by U. X. W. representatives and fed as much of the glorious millennium in store for all courageous enough to join the movement, as they would swallow. But the results had been disappointing. The uncanny suddenness of this terrifying stoppage of all their accustomed occupations and habits seemed to have robbed men of the power to act. It was something they had had no part in. It roused not enthusiasm but cold fear. Many of the disloyal were afraid to cast in their lot with a force so secret and so powerful. And the average American laboring man discovered in this crisis that it was *his home, his government* that was menaced. He suddenly remembered Boche brutalities—bolshivist massacres! Fathers were more fearful of what might happen to their wives and children than allured by any golden promises of future luxury. Neighbors were already congregating together for companionship and protection, afraid that every sound outside betokened some violence. They were already measuring their stocks of food, scanty enough in the average home, and were scheming to hide and conserve these. Capitol City cowered through the long night, but it did not join the revolution.

The U. X. W. leaders had been jubilant over the first day's work until they began to get returns as to public sentiment and the sparseness of recruits. They had counted confidently on the numbers who would beg to be of the victorious movement.

The leaders losing their second night's sleep in watching and plotting were beginning to feel the inevitable physical reaction with its accompanying depression. Some decisive blow must be aimed immediately before the forces of law and order had time to rally.

An hour before dawn the weary group in the governor's room was startled by a number of scattering shots close at hand. Derrick ran down to the main entrance to see what was up. Peering out into the gloom he could see nothing,

but he heard men running. The sentinel at the door said he had heard the shots, coming apparently from the south end of the grounds, and shouting which he could not distinguish. Something was happening in the camp of the regulars who were guarding the east side. A few moments later, soldiers appeared carrying a wounded boy. They said he had come running into camp, the blood flowing from a wound in his shoulder, but had fainted before he could get a word out. The captain had sent out a platoon to investigate.

They took the lad into an office and laying him down on a settee, tried to revive him. The old dull pain at the piteous waste of human life that had plagued Derrick during the war, awoke in him again at sight of the limp boyish figure. Was there never to be an end to the inhumanity of mankind? But he was not permitted to philosophize.

A fusillade of shots struck the walls with sharp ringing blows, there was the crash of falling glass. Men came running, shouting that the capitol was being attacked. They heard an answering volley from the soldiery. Derrick ran down to the basement entrance which was protected by the elaborate stone steps and approaches of the building.

The firing was becoming continuous. He could hear words of command from the officers. After a moment, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw the troops retreating toward the capitol, firing fitfully at what looked like a moving black mass beyond them. He was unarmed save for a revolver. Watching till the troops were within a few hundred yards of the building, he dashed out and assisted in a wounded soldier whose comrades were helping him along. This accomplished, he started on a hunt for a gun. There was a store of arms in one of the basement rooms. He found a machine gun and carried it to the entrance.

For the next half hour Derrick fought with the troops against he hardly knew what. The company had lost several men during their retreat to the statehouse. Once sheltered behind its railings and pillars, or firing from windows, they were comparatively safe. The soldiers were, however, firing at shadows. The bolshevists had deployed

and were so scattered as to be almost invisible in the night, as they crept closer and closer.

Finally, a group tried to rush the basement entrance most disastrously. They left fifteen killed and wounded about the two openings under the main stairs. When these were brought inside they were found to be largely foreign born. Ignorant, sullen faces, all except one, the man who had led the assault. He was wounded but not seriously, and maintained an imperturbable silence while his wound was hastily cared for. He was a young native American; had been a chauffeur of the dare-devil type. Derrick recognized him as a man who had more than once been arrested for speeding. He also recognized Derrick and asked him for a cigarette with an impudent grin.

The attackers were evidently disheartened by their loss. They continued the fight from a safer distance until morning began to dawn, then the gray dimness fast brightening into rose, left them exposed to the sure aim of the regulars. They melted away rapidly and disappeared as mysteriously as they had come. The defenders of the capitol were left to care for the wounded and to bury the dead.

One of the bodies bore pathetic testimony to some wife's or mother's care. The rigid face and staring eyes stood out in ghastly contrast to a strip of brilliant red flannel wound tightly about the man's throat. The cloth was redolent of camphor.

If the bolshevists lost any others besides the ones who fell at the entrance, they managed to take them away with them. The wounded boy had recovered consciousness and explained that he had been watching one of the streets leading to the building in the hope of some excitement when he saw a body of men advancing. He thought at first they were more soldiers. When he found they were not in uniform, he slipped along through the yards to warn the troops. But he was discovered as he entered the grounds and shot down.

Daylight revealed that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to rush one of the banks during the night. The governor had cannily assigned guards to each of these after nightfall. A few soldiers behind stone walls were

more than a match for twice their number in the open. There had been sporadic cases of violence during the night. One or two pitiful tales drifted in. But the property damage and loss of life were inconsiderable. Capitol City began to take heart.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### HELEN'S PROTEST

**T**HE second day of the strike found Helen DeWitt frantically anxious for the safety of the lover she had discarded. With the telephone service cut off the wildest rumors were afloat. Grossly exaggerated reports of the attack on the capitol building were on everyone's tongue. She learned that Derrick had taken part in the fighting. Some one had confused him with the wounded man he had brought in. First, he was dead, later dying, finally, late in the afternoon, she heard from Dr. Bob's lips that he was safe. By this time she was sadly shaken.

Margaret had been called out early in the morning to stay with a friend whose nerves were giving way under the strain. John Camberwell methodically went to his office as usual. He secured a promise from Helen before he departed that she would stay within doors to-day. He deemed this a poor time for attractive young women to be on the streets.

True, all seemed quiet enough but it was a sinister quiet. The throngs down town were mostly men. Everybody was waiting.

Dr. Bob had stopped on his way past to make sure that all was well with his friends and to give them the latest precious news. Washington had found a voice. The administration was sending out the cheering proclamation that traffic would be started and telegraph communication re-established within three days, if every community would do its part. Messages were coming in from more and more wireless stations all the time. It was principally the cities and division points that were affected. The revolutionists had not been able to organize the smaller towns or the country regions.

This was re-assuring, but that dry tearing at the throat

which had tortured Helen all the day was only partially alleviated. Her pride was fast slipping from her. She made but little attempt to conceal her distress from Dr. Bob.

"Where is he now? Will there be more fighting?"

Dr. Bob hesitated an instant. He decided it would not do Helen any harm to have the truth. His sympathies were with Derrick in this affair. He believed Nellen had carried her caprices to a point beyond masculine endurance. It would not hurt the girl to suffer a little as Martin had suffered on her account. He told her no one knew when or where the next blow would be struck, but there would probably be a good deal of sporadic fighting before the normal order was re-established. As for Martin—he was sleeping, resting up for a difficult mission the governor wished him to undertake. She must not mention this, however.

"Is—it—dangerous?" The girl's mouth was so dry she found it difficult to articulate the words. Her nervous fingers were picking at the sash ends of her blue house dress. She had been too perturbed to change since she had dressed in the morning. The opulent diamond in its delicately wrought pale gold setting which she wore for the other man offended Dr. Bob. It did not comport well with her anxiety for Derrick. It made him unwontedly merciless.

"Decidedly," he said shortly.

Helen went white. For a moment he was afraid she would faint.

"Could—could—is there any way—I—I—could see him before—" the world was going round; the doctor seemed a long way off.

The doctor was still merciless. He was turning in his mind the probable effect of such an interview upon Derrick or rather the steadiness of Derrick's nerves. He was sorry for Nellen but her life was not at stake. Derrick's might be, if any distraction impaired his self-control. Taking her by the shoulders he set her firmly down in a chair and went to the kitchen for a glass of water. When she had drunk it, he answered her question.

"You can not! It would be the most disastrous and unkind trick you could play him. A cool head is his defense to-night. Helen, if you have any reparation to make you must save it till his return."

She did not resent his words. She was past resenting anything for she was in the throes of a great fear.

"And if he should not—oh, Dr. Bob, if he should not come back?" She caught his hand and gazed into his face with terror-stricken eyes.

He laid his hand softly on her head. "Nellen, I pray God that he may come back and that you two may be brought together again. But there are crises when personal love and grief must give way to duty. If there were more time I would try to let you see him. But for him to set out after an exciting talk with you—while it might add to his happiness would not make his hand on the wheel any steadier. Love doesn't have that effect, little girl. No, if you love Derrick be woman enough to deny yourself and him."

"He is going to fly—after all these years! God!" She did not ask the question. She knew.

The doctor gravely nodded. "Promise me you won't try to see him. And don't fear he has lost the knack. He has been up often with Jock Landis and on the mail planes."

Helen shook her head. "But—but—"

"Helen, do you promise?"

"Yes—yes!—I understand." She broke down in low choking sobs and without another word hurried out of the room and up the stairs.

The doctor made his way to the machine in anxious thought. He stood beside it several minutes before climbing in. When he did finally seat himself, he fumbled in his pocket for a letter, took it out and stared at it reflectively. Finally, he shook his head and restoring it to his pocket, took the wheel.

The letter was addressed to Helen in Derrick's hand writing and had been intrusted to him some hours before to be delivered to her in case Martin failed to return.

When Margaret De Witt returned home some three

quarters of an hour later, the house seemed deserted save by Olga crooning hymns in the kitchen. Hymns served Olga's need in every emergency from burning the bread to revolution. Margaret smiled and went upstairs in search of Helen. She was not in her room but a very wet crumpled handkerchief and Derrick's photograph lay on the disarranged bed. The girl had evidently flung herself there in a passion of weeping over Derrick.

Margaret had heard but little news. Her face blanched as her imagination ran riot hunting for a cause for this. Had Derrick been hurt? Or killed? What had become of Helen? She hurried into her own room. She was not there. Possibly the attic. She ran up the steep stairs in a panic. It was as untenanted and dark and dusty as usual. She made a minute search of every dim corner. Then she made light of her own fears and ran down to inquire of Olga if Helen had gone out.

The maid told her that Helen had been there a short time before. She had heard her talking with the doctor. No, she hadn't gone away with the doctor for she had seen him drive away, from her pantry window. There seemed nothing for Margaret to do but wait. Oh, for that resourceful telephone! If she could only call up John or the doctor. She went slowly back up the stairs studying over the possible things that might have happened.

Laying off her hat and wraps she smoothed out her veil and put her garments neatly away. She had gained this much of John's orderly habits. She had not been a specially orderly young woman when she first came into his home. Presently a sound in the adjoining room startled her. It was her husband's room. Had he returned? What was he doing there? She walked over and opened the door mechanically.

Helen was there busily engaged. Her hair had come loose and was falling a gleaming coppery cloud over her dull blue morning dress. The girl's cheeks were scarlet and her eyes very bright in spite of the tear-stained swollen lids.

She was pinning up pictures in a species of frieze along one wall—the wall facing the door opening into the cor-

ridor. And the pictures! Her mother gave one gasp and stood rooted to the floor. Naked, sensuous, gleaming shapes! Women—naked women—a round dozen of them, displaying sinuous luring lines of grace. Ripe-breasted undulating cushions of white flesh alternating with slimmer finer-curved beauties. Reclining, sitting, standing, they assailed the eye, tempting exponents of the flesh and its pleasures. Not one dignified with the chastity of art. No nymphs or dryads or nobly built Venus de Milos these! Merely naked women flaunting their unclothed sumptuousness. And Helen was pinning these up in her father's room!

Margaret was so shocked—appalled—that for an instant she could not speak. Helen was so absorbed she had not heard the door opening. She did not notice her mother's entrance. Her lips were drawn tightly together and her hands trembled till she fumbled the tacks and often made two or three attempts before she secured the picture.

Margaret interrupted her labors in the harshest tones the daughter had ever heard issue from her lips.

"Helen, what does this mean?"

The girl started and turned slowly round. She had not counted on her mother being the first to see this handiwork. She faced her, crimson but defiant. For a moment mother and daughter looked into each other's faces dumbly. Margaret's grieved, indignant, astounded. Helen's full of reckless suffering bravado.

When Helen did not answer after this scrutiny, Margaret demanded again: "What does this mean? Where did you get these pictures?"

Helen pointed to the upper drawer of her father's private desk.

Margaret gulped and waited. Her hands were unconsciously clasp and unclasp with spasmodic movements. She was trying to choke back a nervous scream. Helen was plainly wrought up almost to the point of irresponsibility.

Margaret saw she must control herself. She must get to the bottom of this thing calmly.

"What business had you rummaging through your father's private desk?"

Helen had been silent not for lack of words but from anguished shame that her mother should know her father's infamy. She had called it that in her own heart for months, extenuating nothing with the merciless judgment of youth. Now her mother's stern calling of herself to account maddened her.

"I wanted some business paper—it was months ago—and I found these! These—in my own father's drawer! You wondered what came between me and Derrick. It was these! I couldn't forget them! I knew lots of men were weak or wicked. I could understand it—I could bear it! But my own father! MY—own father! Why I should as soon have suspected an angel out of heaven. Why, he always reproved me for the least thing slangy or coarse. He would never tolerate anything the least indelicate—you know. He was in arms about my helping with the Erb Act just because he thought it wasn't nice for a girl. I thought he was old-fashioned and cranky but I was always proud that he was so above—above reproach. They might laugh at him but people couldn't help respecting him. And it was all a lie! He was just carefully decent on the surface—and nasty underneath! Some of the girls at college used to say all men were bad only some didn't get found out. But I didn't believe it. I always said to myself: 'Well, Dad isn't and Dr. Bob isn't, and I guess there are lots of fine men.' Some of the men I went with I didn't quite trust—I used to wonder—just the way they looked at girls or the cynical way they spoke of everything good. I always got rid of that sort as quickly as I could. I couldn't bear them near me—it was as if they had some plague. And when Derrick came—" she paused and choked, "he—I—I was so sure. He was like Father only not so pernickity and old-fashioned. He seemed to put women on a pedestal. He was always so high-minded—so fine. It made me want to be good as nothing or nobody ever had before—not even you, Mummy. Love seemed to me the most beautiful thing—so much more beautiful than any one had ever painted it.

And to think that Derrick loved me—that he wanted to kiss me and cling to me, close—as I did to him—for I wanted his kisses, Mummy, I was just plain hungry for them—and the feel of his arms tight about me. I was ashamed to let anybody—even him—know, but I was. I knew I wasn't half good enough for him but I meant to try, so hard! You know at first I wanted to be married right away, but it seemed best to wait till he was a little surer of his job and Father thought the salary wouldn't be enough to keep up our position. I didn't care a hang for any old position or salary—I wanted Derrick. And then when he made good and got the raise and Father was willing—I ran into these!"

She picked up the two pictures left on the bed and flung them on the floor. Her eyes and cheeks were burning as with a fever. She no longer had any thought for her mother's pain. All the morbid corrupting bitterness of the past year was pouring itself out regardless.

And Margaret listened, standing like a statue except for her nervous clutching fingers. But within her an agonizing resentment was fomenting against her husband. It didn't matter for herself—she didn't care, but her little girl—her Nellen—to have all the sacredness of life turned to gall by her own—it mustn't be! She must find some way—But Helen was talking again, a little more calmly now—wearily, as if she were almost exhausted.

"Can't you see how it spoiled everything? If Father were—were that way, maybe Derrick was, too. Maybe the girls were right—and I had been a little fool. Maybe love was just that with a man and it was really only the woman who had all these beautiful lofty ideals. I tried not to think that. I tried to make myself see that Father might be weak, and Derrick still be the strong man I thought him. But I couldn't forget it. I saw those awful naked creatures every time Derrick touched me. The glory was all gone and something hideous seemed to have crept in between us."

Margaret groaned. "Child, why didn't you tell me?"

"Oh, Mummy, I wanted to. Sometimes it seemed to me I just must run to you and scream it out the way I used

to when I was hurt! I couldn't seem to bear it some days. And I would hurt Derrick so—and he didn't understand—I couldn't tell him! And I couldn't tell you! Why, how could I when Father was your Derrick—your husband?"

Margaret winced and her clutching fingers made purple marks in her palms.

"I didn't mean you to see these to-day—truly I didn't, Mother. I thought Father would come home promptly and I could have it out with him. I didn't care if I did hurt him—I wanted to hurt him! Sometimes, I've almost hated him—my own father! I know I'm wicked, but, Mother, he came between Derrick and me and now he's gone into danger and he doesn't even know I care! And if he's killed, I'll never speak to Father to the longest day I live! I won't! I won't!" Her voice rose almost to a scream.

Margaret went to her and hugged her close. "Don't, dear, don't! Derrick will come back safe—I feel it! God won't let it end this way. Don't say things you'll have to grieve over—you—you—haven't been quite—quite fair to your father." Margaret's mouth was parched and her tongue seemed swollen.

She drew Helen down upon her lap into a big rocker, soothing and caressing her as if she had been a child. She nestled her cheek against the shining coppery hair, puzzling, studying, how to undo this prodigious mischief. She must—she must find a way to make things right—to give the child back her faith once more. Margaret prayed—appealing agonizing petitions to the God who usually seemed to her too remote to be credible. She begged for help with her thoughts while her tongue lamely muttered endearments.

Helen was crying now, a spent moaning sobbing that was terrible to listen to.

By the time the girl could control herself to listen, Margaret had found her cue. It did not matter if she strained the truth. She told God it did not matter. He might count it against her if He must—she could think of no other way.

"Helen," she said almost sternly again, "did it never occur to you that you were misjudging your father? A girl doesn't know enough about life—about a man's temptations—to judge. That is always the trouble with youth. It is so easy to see the wrong—anybody can point out where the best people fail—but to condemn without knowing the reasons—without knowing the temptations—or how he looked at it—surely that was childish—that was not like you, Nellen. And your father, hasn't he always loved you, cared for you? Have you ever known him to fail in respect for me?"

"But, Mother—"

"Wait, dear, please wait and let me finish. Your father has very decided ideas but he is very loyal to them—dig-nified right-living is almost his creed. Do you suppose he would so far forget himself as to do what he regarded as an indecent wrong thing?"

"No, but, Mother—"

"Please—he was brought up to appreciate elegant suitable things—to have expensive tastes—to—love art. But he has not had the money to gratify these tastes since your grandfather's death. His life has been dull and narrow and monotonous. He must have pined more than we knew for the beautiful surroundings of his youth. These pictures—are of exceptionally beautiful women. You know as well as I that great artists have always held the human figure the most admirable thing in all nature."

Margaret's voice was strained but there was no hint of faltering in it.

"Your father could not afford to go abroad to the old world galleries as he must have often longed to do. All he could do was to buy a few prints—he is not a man of great imagination—these represented to him not unworthy ideas but a little adventure into the world of beauty—a look into the world of art that was closed to him." Margaret looked down on the head nestled against her anxiously. Could she make her see? Could she convince her?

Helen stirred uneasily, presently moved so she could look up into her mother's face. She searched it pitilessly

for she wanted to believe she had been unjust—she passionately wanted to be convinced that her father was good.

Margaret steeled herself to meet the look. She must make her case. She must clinch it some way.

"But they are not artistic pictures. They are vulgar—plain vulgar!" Helen protested.

Margaret continued evenly: "Your father's ideas of art were formed in the seventies. Victorian art was usually sentimental or vulgar according to the artist, but that did not prevent its being sincere art. But, dear, I have tried to explain to you that he was merely trying to make up for the meagerness of his own life. You remember a number of stories where a woman starved for beauty has cherished a bonnet or a picture or some absurd bit of bric-à-brac. It may be a spiritual hunger as keen as any physical appetite. And, dear, perhaps I ought to tell you something I hope you have never guessed." Margaret paused. She hardly knew what the effect would be should she make this revelation.

Helen looked up into her face again and she continued hastily.

"You know your father is considerably older than I, and he must have been grave and sober even as a lad—he seemed older than he really was when I married him. I—I was never able to give him such—such love as you have given Derrick. It was not fair, but I did not know, myself—then. Perhaps he has always felt the lack—I tried not to have him know—but sometimes we feel things we don't actually know. Maybe that made him long still more for some satisfying beauty in his life. Can't you see, Nellen, and be sorry for your father?"

"But, Mother, how could those help? If he was lonely—if he wanted more love—how could naked women help? I can't see! Oh, Mother, I can't see!" The girl's tone was incredulously impatient. She tried to get up but her mother pulled her back in her arms.

Every vestige of color had left Margaret's face. It was drawn and set grimly, but involuntarily she lifted her

head and squared her shoulders as if bracing herself for a contest.

Helen could feel the tautening of her muscles—she knew the familiar movement so well—Mums was preparing for battle. This suggestion of her mother's undiminished strength was reassuring in itself.

"I want to, Mums, you don't know how I want to! But—but they seem just plain nasty—to me." Helen's eyes were pleadingly eager.

Margaret did not reply for a moment. She was mustering her strength to throw down the last barriers of reserve—she must lay bare life utterly to the child—truthfully—there was no other way. And she was groping painfully for the right words, for she came of a generation that deemed such frankness a desecration.

"Nellen—dearest—no young girl can understand—quite. There are emotions—that can't be put into words, but I'll—I'll do my best. I never could realize—myself—even after I was married just how—how the men felt, till I held Donald's little helpless body in my arms—I mean the appeal—the wrenching appeal soft bare flesh can make—does make to the man's—to his heart. It isn't all passion as you think—it's more—infininitely more. Why, dear, I used to kiss Donald's baby body and yours in a perfect paroxysm of tenderness. You were my very own—I loved you so—it wasn't all spiritual—there was an over-mastering physical craving to hold you close—closer—to caress you. I used to say I could eat you—you were so precious sweet. Dear, there is this same poignant physical rapture in the man's love for the woman—in the finest man's love—God put it there just as in the mother's love to make the bond a part of life itself, as well as to create new life. And surely, it is a beautiful thing, this crying out of both flesh and spirit for the mate. Of course in the base—in the sensual types of men it becomes degraded into something bestial—it tends to degenerate into mere appetite even in good men, just as all our thoughts and emotions fall short of the highest expression. But, Helen, look at me! I want you to know absolutely that I am speaking

the truth, *I wouldn't have love otherwise* if I had the power to change it! Passion is not ignoble if it goes hand in hand with tenderness—your—father has not failed me in tenderness—he is not understanding—he is sorrowfully lacking in imagination—if these pictures are a morbid—an unworthy expression of instincts which nature meant to be worthy—can't you forgive him, dear?—can't you see that he is to be pitied, not blamed! And, Nellen, you need not be afraid—for Derrick—he has an innate fineness that—that was not granted to your father."

Tiny beads of sweat stood on her temples and her lower lip as she concluded. Her utmost will power could not quite control the trembling of her hands.

Helen answered with another burst of weeping. When she was composed once again, Margaret sent her to her room to bathe her face and change her dress. "Father likes to have you tidy, you know. And don't worry too much about Derrick's safety. He braved death for three years—don't despair over one night. Dr. Bob says the majority of the bolshevists are cowards. Derrick is wary. There, kiss me and forget this hideous dream you have been having."

When Margaret was left alone, she sat staring at the wall with its sinister decoration. She did not actually see the nude forms yet she was painfully aware of their undesired presence. Heart-sick, spent, her thoughts seemed to elude her control. She noticed a new scratch on the old mahogany dresser. She wondered how it came there. Perhaps Olga had banged the vacuum cleaner against it. But she must pull herself together. John would be home any minute. What was she going to say to him? Should she leave the pictures for him to discover in turn? She hated to have to see John. Was it always to be this way, her hating to hear his step—hating to meet him—hating his kisses, yet not quite daring to overturn their long relationship? Hating it, yet not even wanting to break it for Helen's sake. And the very sacrifice she had made for the girl had come near being her ruin. It had not been enough that John should spoil her life. He had come near

ruining Helen's. If Derrick should be killed to-night, he would have ruined the child's life.

Her fists clenched at the thought. "If John DeWitt had done this, she never would forgive him—never!" The ever-smoldering resentment against her husband was fanning into flame. Why should a man be permitted to go his blundering selfish way and his family have to stand for it? Why had she put up with the insult of those pictures all these years? It must be ten years—she counted back, since she had discovered the first lot and had destroyed them in a passion of anger. She had not even spoken about them to John. They were too humiliating—too morbidly nasty. She hoped he would understand her deep loathing without the indignity of words on such a subject, when he found them gone. Possibly he might face her with some attempted apology. He had never mentioned their loss. What would he say now? He might try to suggest facetiously that she was jealous. Men seemed to have some queer distorted notion that the only emotions women ever experienced were love and jealousy. They never took loathing into account, yet she had seen enough to know that this was the dominant emotion in some women's breasts toward their husbands. It had been too often present in her case since she found those pictures. She felt degraded into one of a harem—she was no longer a wife even. When John had let days and weeks go by without mentioning the pictures she had begun to hope he was ashamed. She began to try to explain them to herself—to try to overcome this new aversion to his touch. God knew it had often been hard enough before.

Then—possibly a year later, it was house-cleaning time she remembered because she had asked him for his key so she could take out the desk drawers,—she had found this new set. She had been in a cold rage for days. If he had no respect for her, had he none for himself? What of all his palaver about high-living? Was he not afraid the children or some servant would discover them, as Helen had done, finally? She had wondered how he dared risk Donald's learning this thing of him. She had debated over

and over with herself whether she should speak this time. But if he would not regard her burning the others, what effect would words have? He was probably clinging to them now partly to assert his masculine dignity and authority. The man's domination was a fetish with him. She had ended by doing nothing—partly for the children's sake, partly from the influence of her own early training which bade the woman endure.

She saw at last her endurance had been mere weakness. And now what? If she left them up and told him Helen had done this thing, would he feel remorse or would his egotism defend itself in resentment against the child? She had no wish to see the breach between father and daughter widen. No, the pictures had done their worst now. She would put them back in the drawer and try to forget them.

She got up heavily and began to take them down from the wall. After all what did it matter? If this life were all, it would at least be soon over for her. If it were not—and deity was really benevolent, she would not mind the discipline of this sojourn—drastic as it had been in her case. Because in that other life there would surely be Bob, and, she hoped, marriage as we know it here—rather as it was possible to know it here. That was the eternal pity! When we had this beautiful and satisfying relation granted as an amelioration for the trials and tragedies of life, both for the man and the woman, that man had so often robbed woman of her share in it by degrading it into a personal convenience for himself.

She was mercifully forgetting the offensive pictured forms. Laying them, one upon the other mechanically as she removed the thumb tacks, she had all but the last two down when she heard a step on the stair. That must be John. Should she try to conceal them? Something within her rebelled. She turned round as the door opened and faced her husband calmly.

John Camberwell had had a most trying day. He had seen a man killed on the street. He had seen various men arrested. He had seen the law and order, which were his god, imperiled—perhaps—overturned. Nobody knew yet

what was coming. He had had to walk a mile and half from the business center and arrived fifteen minutes late for dinner which was not served at this tardy hour. Margaret was neglecting her home duties more and more. He must remonstrate. It was unendurable that a man's home should not be properly kept up.

He entered the room full of this train of thought. Margaret's presence there was a surprise.

"To what am I indebted—" he did not finish his sarcastic query. The two pictures still on the wall caught his attention. His eye dropped from these to the one still in his wife's hand, and thence to the pile on the bed.

"What are you doing with my property!" he added harshly, with a slight drawing in of the nostrils.

"Putting them away. Helen had been arranging them as a little surprise for you. She discovered them months ago, it seems, when she was hunting for stationery one morning. The effect on her was not happy. It was these which poisoned her mind against marriage and caused that disregard for your wishes you so greatly deplored. I have done my best to put the matter in a better light to her. Perhaps, you may have some explanation to offer her yourself. In the meantime, John, I think it might be well to destroy these."

She gathered up the pile, added the two on the wall and held them out to him.

John Camberwell's expression was not pleasant. For an instant a hint of something malignant showed in his eyes. He seemed to master it almost immediately.

"Thank you, my dear, permit me to remind you that I do not desire suggestions as to my personal affairs." He moved a step forward and took the pictures from her hand.

Margaret stiffened.

"I have no wish to meddle with your personal affairs, John, but it shall be my personal affair not to live under the same roof with those any longer. You may choose between us here and now."

John Camberwell's nostrils narrowed a trifle more.

"Ah, going in for heroics, are you? I did not know the modern woman owned to any such vulgar emotion as jealousy," he sneered.

For an instant she was tempted to pour out the rage within her in a revealing torrent of contempt. But habit is strong and it had been the habit of Margaret DeWitt's adult life to be kindly and controlled. Her face flamed but she replied coolly.

"I do not care to discuss the matter. Will you choose?"

John Camberwell moved another step toward her, scanning her face. He had not forgotten her stand on the appointment. He stood there apparently considering for a full minute. Then he moved deliberately over to the mantel, helped himself to a match, struck it and, igniting the pictures in his hand, held them till the flame crept upward, then tossed them into the grate.

"You need not wait dinner on me—I shall go over to the club," he said.

Margaret nodded and walked past him to her own room.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### DERRICK AND JOCK

THE government hangar was being operated by the aid of dark lanterns. It was a velvety black night. The starlit heaven cupped the frosty world compactly beneath. You could feel rather than see the wall of mountains that stretched out their peaks to meet it. Derrick, fresh from his sleep and a cold tub, felt younger than he had for months. "God, it seemed good to be of some use in the world once more!" The fog of regret and maddening self-distrust which had enveloped him since his break with Helen was gone at last. He had fought again among his peers for a cause—a cause he knew to be worth fighting for. If the fates had denied him a wife and a home, they at least gave him work to do. He was the freer to do that work because he had no one to grieve if he went west before his time.

There was no self-pity in his musing. He had worked the worst of the hurt out of his system. He was very nearly content with life as the plane took the air and began to mount steadily toward the pendant stars. It was good to be alive—to feel the swift buoyant motion—the wind against his cheek. After all work was a man's life—not love. Love was but an incident of youth. Yet some way Helen had not seemed so close since the early days of their engagement as she did to-night. Possibly it was his writing to her that had seemed to bring her near. If anything should happen, he did not want to leave any rankling wound on his account to trouble her. So he had written a line to assure her of his love and his belief that it had been the wise course to part since she could not give him the complete love he had hoped for.

In spite of himself his pulses leaped a little still at every thought of her. It was not merely her physical beauty,

though he could see the gleaming hair ripple away from her white neck. He always had to struggle not to kiss that spot. It was the mischief in her eyes, her pretty, unexpected, teasing ways—her sweetness. Hang it all, it was because she was his Nellen! Who could say why a man loved one particular maid out of the thousands that crossed his path? Call it fate—call it chance—call it propinquity and take the poetry all out, as you please. But Nellen sang through his veins as no other girl ever had. And the fragrance of her was all about him as he sped on through the night. He felt marvelously warm and light and happy.

The mountains disentangled themselves from the blackness and towered threateningly beneath him. His eyes were strained for any chance camp fire that might reveal the presence of one of the machine guns that had disabled the mail plane. He was relieved when he began to pass over small scattered villages to find lights twinkling in most of them. Terror did not seem to be stalking in their midst. He wondered what the inhabitants thought of the cut wires and stopped traffic. Had they heard? He dropped handfuls of the printed leaflets the governor had had prepared, assuring the people that the government would soon have the uprising under control and that rail and telegraphic communication would be quickly re-established.

On and on he went, hearing no sound save the rush of the wind and the humming of his motor, for many miles. When he reached the first important town, he stopped his machine in a lonely open field. He waited and listened for some twenty minutes, scouting a little about the neighborhood to see if the noise of the plane had attracted attention. When he felt sure there was no one near, he made his way into the town and hunted up the mayor. Delivering a sealed dispatch, he started back to the field accompanied by the mayor's son and a neighbor armed with rifles. There had been some rioting in the town. The mayor wished to see him safely away.

As they turned into a grassy lane leading to the field where he had left the plane, a bullet whizzed past them, another and another. A fourth tore up the sod a few rods

ahead of Martin. Separating, they crouched for a moment then slipped along the fence. He was sick lest the bolshevists had discovered the machine. Outstripping his companions he leaped the fence. The firing had ceased. Stealing out into the field he reconnoitered. He could see the shadowy outlines of the plane—that was all. He listened and waited for some five minutes. The others had caught up and crouched silently near by. Slowly they crept closer. Only the rustling noises of the dry grasses and weed stalks could be detected. Reassured, Derrick leapt up and ran to the machine. There was no evidence that any one had been there. He scanned the ground about for tracks by the aid of his electric torch. It was soft enough to reveal footprints.

"All serene apparently!" he assured them in a whisper. Once more he strapped himself in and soon had the motor humming. The plane glided, lifted, began to soar upward, when voices were heard and men came running. A shot whistled through the air wide of the mark. He was safely on his way again. As the earth dropped beneath him, he seemed once more to feel Helen's haunting presence. "Did writing to her make me clear daffy or is this some mental telepathy business?" he demanded of the wide spaces of the air. But lights were soon twinkling ahead again in the distance. A tiny mining camp on a hillside, it proved. It was comforting to find life going forward normally even in such remote insignificant places.

All night long he flew and dropped his messages. He did not have to leave the plane again except at two government stations where he also stocked up on gasoline. These were both heavily guarded. At the farthest point the governor's reinforcement had arrived about an hour previous. It was almost five A. M. when he crossed the state line. Gregg had warned him to look out for danger here. This was a thickly populated mining region and was known to be honeycombed with U. X. W. The sab cat had stalked through more than one mine and smelter here.

The landscape unrolled beneath him blurred and peaceful in the gray half light. The mountain gorges were still piled deep with snow, but many of the slopes were swept

bare and mine shacks and tall smelter chimneys loomed darkly in the desolate wastes. But the chimneys poured no incense of smoke and flame into the morning. They bore cold sinister witness that a blight had fallen on the land.

Derrick sped by watchfully. This was plainly an unhealthy neighborhood for government planes. There seemed no one on guard—no signs of life till he was skirt-ing the foothills on the other side. Then utterly without warning—he had been daringly flying lower and lower for observation purposes—a shot pierced the wood of his car. He shot upward in a hurry. He could see nothing to indicate where the shot had come from though it was daylight now, and the east a very glory of rosy light reflected in the dazzling crystals of the snow.

Some two hours later he reached his destination, a large military post, from which Governor Gregg hoped to secure reinforcements. It took the remainder of the morning to persuade the colonel that patriotism demanded action without waiting for orders from his superiors, who were indefinitely cut off. Derrick finally secured his promise to have four companies ready to entrain the following day in case the governor could get a train through as he planned.

"Your governor is on his job evidently," the officer commented admiringly. "We haven't had a peep from Denver. Of course we are farther away than from Capitol City."

Derrick rested until evening. The colonel kindly had his plane overhauled for him. At nightfall he set out for home. The return journey was less eventful. Mile after mile he flew through a seeming wilderness of space. The steady purring of the motor was so soothing he became terrified lest he should drowse off. He had hard work to dispel this sleepiness. He tried to think of something harrowing enough to keep him awake. He almost wished somebody would take a shot at him to furnish a little excitement.

He thought he saw more lights than on the previous night. At the first mail plane station they told him three men had come through by motor from Carlton, sixty miles that side of Capitol City, and that a train of five cars

had arrived at the junction, but had been halted there because the track was torn up for some rods. They hoped to go on the next day. Capitol City had its light and water works systems operating again after a fashion. Two companies of infantry were patrolling the streets, and many of the merchants were resuming business, but the factories were too fearful of sabotage to light their fires yet. There had been some rioting and violence and more looting on the outskirts, especially of some of the closed country homes. The report was that a number of these had been burned to the ground after being robbed. But on the whole the outlook was much improved.

Derrick made better time on the return as he had no stops except for gasoline. But he could not quite make the city before daylight. Dawn was breaking as he glided over the mountain range guarding Capitol Valley. He began to study the landscape again warily. This range was believed to be harboring caches of arms, possibly camps of the rioters, as well as one or more air guns. He strained his eyes in vain, no betraying camp fire or other sign of life was to be seen. He descended some two hundred feet trying to spy out the deeper canyons and some of the winding gulches.

Suddenly, utterly without warning he came upon what he was looking for. He had dropped till he was skimming above the peaks. He could hear the wind soughing through the pines, the white trunks of the aspens gleamed like ghostly sentinels along the upper slopes. In the heart of one of these thickets a space had been cleared and a shack erected—recently, it was plain, for the boards were quite new. It would have looked like a snowed in mining camp but for a sinister black muzzle pointing skyward from a rude shelter a little way off up the mountain. A man was standing in the doorway of the shack gazing at him. The noise of his motor had heralded his coming. He could not see whether there were men at the gun or not. He did not linger to find out. Darting upward, he headed for the divide. If he had to land unexpectedly he preferred to land on the opposite side of the mountain. He was not quite swift enough. The black muzzle barked

and recoiled. Barked again and recoiled—three times repeated the meneuver, three times with workmanlike precision. "That gunner was on the front!" Derrick said to himself ruefully, at the first shot. He was circling, rising, trying to confuse their aim but the second shot whistled close. The third pierced his tank. There was a disagreeable odor of escaping gasoline. He opened the valve of the reserve tank. He had a horrid fear lest the men at the mail plane station might have neglected to fill this. If he could only make the other side of the mountain! He headed straight forward, making some progress, the snow and rocks of the summit seemed rising up to meet him. Just one minute more and he would be temporarily safe. Another shot! The plane wobbled perilously a dozen rods farther, then began to drop. He pulled the stic up short against him. He was heading down among the rocks on the far side of the peak. He managed to veer a little to the right toward a grove of young pines in a side canyon. If he could make this the pine tops would break his fall.

The heavy machine crashed into the young pine trees with a shriek of rending boughs and splintering wood. The impact hurled Derrick unconscious to the ground. He came to himself some moments later confused and dizzy, and neatly imbedded in a snow drift. It was some time before he could recall exactly what had happened, though the wrecked machine in the trees just above him was ample evidence as to the nature of the accident. He tried to get up but only floundered deeper into the snow. A stinging pain in his shoulder rewarded his effort. He lay still an indefinite time longer trying to collect his thoughts and to make some plan to get down into the valley. No sound was to be heard from the other side of the mountain. Had they realized that the machine was crippled? Would they come in pursuit? He listened intently—nothing but the wind again and a squirrel chattering in the trees near by. Some birds were flying anxiously about the fallen plane, piping excitedly. That seemed all. But he must at least get far enough away from the plane to conceal himself. He reached for the tiny flask of stimulant in his pocket. The draught cleared his head perceptibly.

Once more he attempted to rise and succeeded in getting painfully to his feet, in some two feet of snow. Something was radically wrong with his shoulder. Whether he had been shot or injured in the fall he could not determine at first. He finally decided it was a broken bone. There was no blood except from some deep scratches. But the shoulder was hurting him fiendishly.

He looked about him. It was a tiny gulch opening off a large canyon. He thought the latter must be Big Cottonwood from the lay of the peaks. He had spent more than one summer day tramping through this region, but the great drifts banked half way up the trees in places obliterated most of the familiar landmarks. He had always wanted to explore the mountains in winter. Providence was gratifying the wish most unexpectedly, he reflected grimly.

It must be ten miles down to the valley. The machine was hopeless. He could see that at a glance. The snow was evidently rotten from the two or three warm days they had recently had. And if it were soft in this altitude, it would be worse as he descended. As he scanned the slopes below him he decided the snow must be twelve feet deep in places since the lower branches of some of the larger trees were almost buried from sight.

Ten miles with this shoulder! It could only be done on snowshoes. Even then his friends from the other side of the mountain might overtake him. To be sure he might conceal himself in a drift, but a drift could not obliterate the betraying tracks in the level snow. And the bare spots were few and far between. But Derrick had been in too many tight places before, to waste any time despairing.

He hastily contrived some crude snowshoes from a broken wing of the plane which mercifully hung within reach. "Climbing would sure be superfluous, Derrick, me mon," he grunted half audibly, relapsing into the familiar brogue, as he sometimes did, in an emergency. It was no light task attaching the clumsy snowshoes to his feet with that shoulder. He achieved the feat with great pain and many contortions. Then with a parting glance toward the mountain behind him, he set out cautiously down the gorge.

It was little over a quarter of a mile to the main canyon. The snow had melted entirely away here in places and he found the going somewhat easier. If he could reach the mine a few miles lower down—supposing this was Big Cottonwood—he might get aid and it was probable the road had been kept open from there on. He toiled along with many rests out of respect to the shoulder. Derrick alternately admonished it tenderly and berated its hard-heartedness.

“That’s it—strike a fellow when he’s down, will ye? Maybe you think you are bossing this expedition.” Could he hold out? He wondered. The sun had come out bright and clear, and, as the morning advanced, beat down hot upon his back and head. The reflection from the snow was blinding. His face was as sunburned as if he had been on water. It was mid-day before a sharp bend in the canyon revealed the longed for shacks of the Gold-field mine.

The unpleasant thought had flashed upon him that the mine might have been taken over by the revolutionists in the general upheaval. If so he would be deserting the proverbial frying pan for still hotter quarters. Concealing himself in the brush, he sat down to watch the buildings for some indication as to the character of their occupants. The entire absence of smoke was not reassuring. Deserted! He waited a full half hour to make sure. Then cautiously slipped nearer and finally explored the boarding house. The cook might have been obliging enough to leave something eatable about. Derrick had not been so hungry since war times.

He had. Mountain rats were scampering over the table where the remains of a meal had evidently lured them. They had taken every scrap, leaving the dishes as stripped as if the Chink cook had scoured them. Every bit of loose food in the place, and there must have been considerable, for the men seemed to have made a hasty exit—nothing had been put away or secured—had been devoured. Derrick found some canned stuff on a shelf, and a side of bacon hanging from the rafters which had defied the voracious rodents.

He hurriedly fried a bit of bacon over a fire of twigs and with cold beans made out a comforting meal. Taking the remainder of the beans along with him he started on once more. The road was broken, and traveling not so difficult, but the hurt shoulder was taking sorry toll of his strength. If he only dared to lie down and sleep awhile. Perhaps he would have done better to stay at the mine. But he must reach a surgeon and the men might yet be on his trail. If he could once get out of the canyon he stood a chance of being picked up on any of the valley roads.

On and on he plodded, stopping more often now to rest. The pain was becoming unendurable. Sometimes he seemed to lose himself for comforting minutes. He would be farther down the canyon when he remembered to notice again. There was less and less snow and he began to recognize many familiar rocks and trees and overhanging cliffs, where the road wound sunless and gloomy along the narrow shelf of soil between the rocks and the tumbling brawling stream that was fast swelling to a torrent with the melting snows.

But the road seemed to lengthen out maddeningly. Still he stumbled on. About a mile from the mouth of the canyon he came upon a camp of summer cottages. They were boarded up, windows and doors. If he could creep into one and rest for a little while! At length he found one that had been opened by some tramp or traveler in straits. It was a little distance from the others and concealed by a jutting point of rock and a clump of willows. No one would be likely to find him there if he had been pursued. Besides, able-bodied men would have caught up with him hours before. He went in and securing the door behind him, made himself comfortable as might be with a mattress and some old strips of carpet he found piled up on the rough dining table. He was asleep before he had fairly stretched his length in the bunk.

He had crept into the cottage in the late afternoon. The sun was finding its way through the chinks of the boarded up windows, sending long shafts of light among the dust and cobwebs of the dingy interior, before he

awoke. He lay there for a time listlessly. He seemed too tired and hot to do much thinking. Strange those few gleams of sunlight could make the room so hot. His throat was parched—burning. He crawled from under the bits of carpet. It did not seem to help. He must have water. There were some old cooking utensils hanging under a shelf. He staggered up and took down an old sauce pan. He had heard water running somewhere. He remembered noticing it in the night. It was several minutes before he realized that the continuous roaring in his ears which had been annoying him, came from the creek back of the cabin.

He managed to stagger out there and fill his tin. He got down and bathed his head over and over in the icy water. Then he remembered where he was, and he knew he must start on again. The shoulder did not hurt so much, but he was burning with fever. He must have help soon. He had some trouble finding the road. Things had a trick of getting dim before him. Still he felt sure he could follow the track when he once discovered it. He weaved from side to side a good deal but it was easier to walk in the road, so he stayed in the road. He made the mile down the canyon and tramped on for another mile. The road seemed to grow wider.

But he had forgotten why he was in the road. He knew he was sick. Why was he out on a lonely road when he should be at home in bed? He could not think of any reason. But he felt that there was something very urgent that he must try to remember. Finally, the image of Helen came into his mind. At first she seemed to be walking there beside him. Then he missed her. He imagined he heard her on ahead and he tried to hurry. Pretty soon he had the idea that he was going to find her some place a long way off, only he was so weary. He sat down for a moment on the bank by the roadside and presently drowsed off in a huddled heap in the sunshine.

A meadow lark was calling in the distance. The warm sun was bringing a hint of life to the valley; green tufts were lifting among the tindery brown of last year's herb-age; the low growth along the sloughs showed color in the

budding shoots. In the distance some faint smoke wreaths curled upward. But Derrick slept on.

The sun reached the zenith and began to descend, drifting cloud banks sent long shadows scurrying over the foot hills, but no one passed along the road. The blight which had fallen upon Capitol City had terrified the whole countryside into inaction as well. In the mid-afternoon a droning humming began to mingle with Derrick's dreams. It grew louder and louder but Derrick did not rouse. The plane swept directly overhead, but the dark heap by the roadside was too small to attract the flyer's notice, even if his eyes had not been straining anxiously toward a second fluttering speck in the distance ahead.

So Derrick slept on alone again unmindful of the increasing cold, unmindful of the plane speeding away from him. No sixth sense warned him of an enemy's approach in that other plane sweeping rapidly down the valley. He did not see the two planes circle, maneuver, till one dropped suddenly downward. He did not even rouse when a motor stopped beside him and he was lifted in and carried toward the city. Not till the officer at the federal landing field, to whom he had been delivered because of his aviator's uniform, forced some brandy down him, did he open his heavy eyes. He babbled volubly then, demanding to be taken to Helen DeWitt—she was expecting him—it was urgent but he could not seem to remember why it was urgent. He was burning with fever.

"We'll get him in to the hospital as soon as that other machine comes back. It's a case for a surgeon all right," said the officer. "Any of you know him?"

The men who had brought him in shook their heads.

The plane which had survived the combat had landed at the field a half hour before. The aviator was pacing up and down impatiently waiting the return of an automobile sent out to bring in the victim from the fallen air plane. He came and bent over Derrick, scrutinizing him. Derrick's face was scratched and bruised, and dark with a two days' growth of beard. The aviator stooped lower.

"My God, it's Martin!" he exclaimed. "What in hell has happened to him? Where did you find him?"

It was Jock Landis—Jock Landis who had been flying almost continuously for thirty-six hours, coming with all the speed he dared to help protect a woman, a child, and his bed-ridden father. He looked a very different person from the debonair youth Capitol City had known. He was thin, haggard, with dark circles of fatigue about his eyes. He had traveled far in more ways than one since that evening when he had offered to pay Minette.

Derrick glanced up incuriously. "She's expecting me," he mumbled confidentially, "you understand—she's expecting me. They thought they could keep me from her there up on the mountain. What's a mountain?—just snow—nothing but snow—and they thought they could stop an Irishman with snow! Curse that shoulder!" A spasm of pain contracted his face. He moved slightly. "But she's expecting—ex—" his voice dropped to a whisper and he relapsed again into unconsciousness.

"He must have been injured some time since—he doesn't seem to have been wounded." Jock had opened his tunic and was examining the swollen shoulder. "Fall most likely—it may be only broken bones—you say there was no sign of a plane anywhere about? He must have tramped a considerable distance then. He ought to have care immediately! How soon do you expect that machine back?" he ended impatiently.

"There it is now," said the officer. "I guess you did for the other chap all right."

A car had drawn up in front of the building and two soldiers were lifting out a shapeless something wrapped in an army blanket.

"In here?" they inquired of the officer.

"Dead?"

"Stone dead."

"Take him into the shed," he commanded. "Want to have a look?" turning to Jock.

Jock nodded and followed him out.

The corpse's head and face had been badly crushed. At a word from the officer one of the soldiers searched his pockets. There was a considerable roll of bills, a gold match safe, and a gold-mounted cigarette case.

The officer found a name engraved on the last article. "Friedrich von Mayern," he read aloud, looking around the little circle inquiringly. No one responded.

"Well, that doesn't convey any information to me—never heard of any such person, but there's sure one anarchist the less. I guess this junk had better go to the Colonel. You may seal it up in a big envelope and put it in the safe, Sergeant. Bury him over on the north slope—the ground ought to be thawed deeper down there—it gets the sun all day. We'll get you and your disabled friend to the city in a jiffy, Mr. Landis. Guess we'd better put him on a stretcher."

Jock delivered Derrick over to a surgeon at the best hospital Capitol City afforded, a half hour later, with instructions that Miss Helen DeWitt was to be notified at the earliest possible moment.

The streets seemed quiet. He could learn nothing definite of his family, but the authorities at the hospital had heard that the L. and A. had been attacked twice the preceding day. They had had a number of wounded brought in from there. The government machine took him back to Main street and he hurried off to reconnoiter about the stately mansion he had once called home. It was growing dusk and the residence streets were practically deserted. Citizens had no desire to be out after nightfall, despite the protection of the patrolling regulars. So Jock met no one and came on the colonial mansion unprepared.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### JOCK'S OWN

**J**OCK had no intention of intruding upon that tragic household. He meant to assure himself of their safety and then stay quietly in some hotel until the rioting was safely over. He knew Hardwick could be depended upon to do everything humanly possible to protect the L. and A. plant, but would there be any one looking out for the house? The streets were partially lighted once more. He noted occasional evidences of violence as he turned into the shadowy streets of the fashionable residence quarter. Windows were broken here and there. He saw a mahogany front door that had been battered in, hanging by one hinge. A little farther along a mansion well back in its grounds, had been partly burned. He hurried on.

His apprehension was growing. The factory had been twice attacked, they had said. His father had never been popular. With all this hate and greed let loose, how had he fared? When Jock turned into his home street he was almost running.

He caught a glimpse of the white outline of the house a block away. Thanks be, it was still standing! But as he came closer he saw that the glass had been broken out clean from all the windows. The big white mansion loomed a tragic ghostly shape with sightless eyes. Something icy clutched at Jock's heart. He broke into a run and leaped up the steps as one pursued. The door had been battered in, and lay a wrecked heap on one side of the familiar portal. There was but one whole article of furniture in the hall, the old hall tree. And upon this Jock's old cap still hung. How it had defied the draught whistling through the denuded house it would be hard to say, but it clung there and a shaft of light from the arc lamp on the corner threw it and a space of wall about it, into bold relief in the cavernous gloom of the unlighted interior.

Jock whipped out his pocket torch and made a hurried search of the lower floor. Furniture had been broken, hangings torn from their fastenings, pictures and bric-à-brac and books thrown down in heaps on the polished floors. Dark stains were to be seen in three places. When he reached the rear of the house he found the destruction even greater. Apparently there had been an explosion and the whole corner of the dining room was torn away. The plaster was hanging in pendulous masses from portions of the ceiling, the rest had been stripped to the lath. Even some of these were partly torn off.

He hurried back to the staircase. Above, the work had not been quite so thorough. The guest room was almost untouched. In the nursery where he had met Min-tin three weeks before, the little Mother Goose figures still frolicked on the walls unscarred. The dainty crib with its blue silken coverlet dragging on the floor, stood where he had seen it that morning. A rattle of silver bells had been ground under foot, and the fragile furniture overturned or crushed. Muddy tracks went everywhere. Closet doors were flung wide. With an oath he rushed shivering to his father's bed chamber.

It was on the south side and the wind from one of the canyons blew chilly through the glassless windows. Wearing apparel was strewn everywhere. The bed clothing was entirely stripped from the bed and some of it hung half out one of the windows. Drawers and their rifled contents were flung all about. The little wall closet where his father had kept wine and cigars as a solace for sleepless nights, had been forced open and the floor beneath littered with broken glass.

Jock hid his face in his hands. His conscience had been busy since he held his child in his arms that morning. Something new and poignant had wakened in him at the touch of that warm helpless atom of humanity. And this novel emotion had stamped the picture of the little fair child and the pleading fair mother on his consciousness, till they seemed a living presence always with him. That was why he had come.

He sat in this ghastly desolation until he was chilled and

stiff. Then he forced himself to search all the remaining rooms—even the attic. The attic was peacefully orderly. Cobwebs hung untraced by the concussion, their silken threads unbroken, not one filament lacking for the perfect mesh. Some old trunks of his mother's stood precisely where they had stood since the days when she had filled them herself. He lifted one dusty lid and held down his torch to find a tray packed with his own childish treasures, mechanical toys, a little sailor suit and cap, marbles by the dozens—myriads of broken odds and ends that had once delighted him and had been discarded, to be gathered up and cherished here. He ran his hand gingerly through the mass, recognizing object after object whose existence he had forgotten. Had his mother never thrown aside any of his childish possessions? He shut the trunk reverently.

The soldier patrolling the block saw him emerge from the wrecked house and halted him summarily. He had no news to offer as to what had become of the family when Jock explained who he was. The police would surely know—or the governor. The man had only come on the beat that evening. He did not remember having heard anything about a Bracy Landis. So many had suffered during the last few days. It was much safer though now. He seemed to think this last information should relieve Jock's anxiety.

But Jock could not wait to tramp the tedious two miles necessary to reach the police station or the three to the state-house. Hardwick would surely know if they were still alive. But he would be at the L. and A. and the factory was farther away than the police station even if it were not picketed. He glanced back toward the spot where the garage had stood. There was a fool's chance that there might be at least an old motorcycle left there. It had been razed to the ground.

Another thought was Dr. Bob. His residence was but a few blocks away. Surely he would know.

The doctor's runabout was just leaving the curb as Jock rounded the corner of the block. He shouted and ran. The doctor stopped, saw him, and turned the machine about. When he recognized him, he opened the door with-

out a word of greeting and pulled him in. "I'll tell you as we go along—we may be in time still—I have but just come from the hospital—she couldn't last much longer—we thought she might possibly rouse an instant at the end." Dr. Bob said this listlessly as he might have announced a pleasant day. He had been working day and night since the strike began, snatching a hasty meal or a few minutes' sleep, when and where he could. He had no force left for emotion.

He expressed no surprise at Jock's mysterious reappearance. He was pushing the little motor to its utmost. Explanations could wait. Death was relentlessly impatient.

"The child?" Jock formed the words with his dry lips twice before any sound came.

"Safe—she saw to that—Margaret DeWitt is caring for it. They got your father—nobody knows exactly what took place except that your old chauffeur saw the mob coming and warned them. She would not leave your father. The chauffeur begged her to come—he would get the soldiers there on the run if she would only come. She would not budge but she gave him the child. He was to take it to a neighbor's and hurry back. They thought they might be able to drag your father away between them. The beasts were too swift. Your father was dead when the soldiers got there. She had been shot and—ill-treated—was unconscious—has never come to."

The doctor ceased speaking and scanned the street ahead anxiously. He swung round the next corner with a turn sharp enough to lift two wheels from the pavement. Jock did not notice. He could not see the street ahead. He was trying to visualize that slender girl facing a mob. His hands were clenched, his whole lower jaw was trembling. He tried to choke back the rending sobs. The doctor had to shake him like a rat to get his attention when they drew up at the hospital.

Jock gulped down a mouthful of brandy and pulled himself together. It was a private hospital—every public one had been long since filled to overflowing.

"How long since you have eaten anything?" demanded the doctor.

"This morning."

Dr. Bob gave a whispered command to a passing orderly and hurried him along. They had to thread their way among the cots placed in the corridor. Every inch of floor space was utilized. The doctor knocked softly at number twelve.

Veda opened the door. She was watching alone for the moment, the nurse having been called away for a more urgent case. She also expressed no surprise at seeing Jock. Every circumstance of life was so abnormal now that people accepted what came numbly without comment. Their strength was too utterly exhausted in action.

Veda had been comforting, persuading, reassuring the women of the L. and A. They had been practically in a state of siege there for forty-eight hours, though they had some egress and ingress under the protection of the soldiers. The U. X. W. had been indiscreet enough to leave hostages in the persons of their wives and children. They could not make any general attack on the quarters without endangering the lives of their families. Hardwick was quick to see the protection this afforded and zealously guarded them lest they should slip out or hold communication with the strikers. Poor Mrs. Schmidt had neither seen nor heard of her Carl for days and was frantic with anxiety. There were many others as desperate. Veda went about helping these as cordially as she did the others, but she offered no word of sympathy. Their own men had wilfully brought all this distress upon them, and they had been too timidly weak to make any effective protest.

"Women must learn to stick up for what is right regardless of their men," she told them. She was thinking of Ivan as she said this and wondering if he were here in the thick of things. Hardwick could have told her that he had crossed his path twice and that Ivan had fired at him from behind a sheltering bill board, missing him fortunately by a scant inch. Jealousy did not improve Ivan's aim.

But Veda had entrusted her task of solacing to Connie Brown and had flown to Minette's side when she heard of

her condition. She had been watching the greater part of the day beside the broken bruised body that had been so delicately lovely a few short hours before. Her thoughts were drifting. She had been going back over Minette's brief life in the silence before the men knocked.

Nature had fashioned Minette so exquisitely, so painstakingly, turned her out in physical perfection for her highest uses, and man had tried to degrade her into an amusement. She did not so much blame Jock. In a way he was as much a victim of environment as Minette. He had loved her. He had loved her sordidly because he had never been taught to love any other way. Jock was capable of loving like a poet—better still, like a man. But the public opinion of his class sneered at any love in which spirit and body were equal partners. They held practically that the virile man's body must dominate his soul. Souls according to their cult could not be nourished on red corpuscles. What wonder then that Jock followed his natural impulses so long as they were pleasant, and discarded other natural impulses of justice and tenderness, when they would have entailed sacrifice and hardship?

She was thinking of Jock and she was scarcely surprised when Jock entered. The thing that surprised her was how he had aged in the year since she had seen him. The arrogant thoughtless boy was gone; this was a man who had suffered and come into knowledge. She held out her hand almost cordially.

He gripped it in a nervous clasp and held it as if he must have some support, but his eyes were already looking past her toward Minette.

She led him up to the high iron cot. The figure outlined under the bed covering was so still. The little hands were waxen and one was disfigured by a long deep scratch. The wrist of the other was discolored by a black bruise. One side of the face was terribly bruised and scarred as well. The other as perfect as ever, except for its pallor. Minette's long golden hair spread like a gleaming mesh of light over the pillow. Jock gazed until the sight was unbearable.

"The devils!" he muttered. The next minute he was on his knees kissing her hands, entreating her to rouse and forgive him.

His utter self-abandon and remorse were torturing to the two who stood by and heard. Minette seemed to have slipped too far from the things of the flesh even for his voice to call her back. Possibly, she was fleeing gladly, swiftly, toward a spirit world because she had been somewhat surfeited with the flesh in her twenty earthly years.

The thin muslin over her breast rose and fell with her hurried breathing. It did not seem quite so labored as it had been, Veda thought. Dr. Bob noticed this, too, and stepping over beside Jock quietly took out his watch and timed it. Next he lifted a hand, groping a moment before he could catch the feeble pulse. He laid it gently back on the coverlet and shook his head at Veda.

Jock unexpectedly lifted his head in time to detect the movement.

"She is go-ing?—you think? Can't you do something?—isn't there some stimulant?" he pleaded.

By way of reply Dr. Bob spoke to Veda. "Run, get a nurse quick!"

The nurse came and Jock got to his feet blindly to stand aside while they worked over her hastily. In a few moments the doctor pushed him gently forward again. "Watch close, it will be only for a moment if she wakes."

Jock stooped down, holding his breath to listen. The muslin seemed to rise and fall a little more regularly. Minute after minute the breathing grew stronger, but the waxen lids did not lift—the hands rested still inert on the covers. Then the breath seemed to weaken again almost imperceptibly from moment to moment. Dr. Bob shook his head again. The nurse glanced pitying at Jock. She did not quite understand who he was. She had heard that this patient's husband was dead—perhaps this was a brother. At any rate she was sorry for any human being who suffered as he seemed to be suffering. Veda slipped close to the foot of the bed with her eyes fastened upon Minette's face.

Presently the lids flickered, once, twice, then languidly

lifted. Jock gave a cry and clasped her shoulders, raising her a little. She seemed to look up at him. There was no recognition in her eyes. Two or three short sighing breaths. The golden head drooped back of its own weight and she was gone.

Jock's cry of agony startled them all.

Dr. Bob motioned to the others to leave the room. He waited till the first paroxysm of grief was over, then he drew Jock's arms from beneath the dead girl and guided him to a chair.

"Don't, lad, don't! We must believe she knows and understands more than you could have found words to tell her. Come, there is your boy—yours and hers. Make it up to him—she would have it so."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE NEXT THREE DAYS

**T**HE limp little figure on the high hospital cot drew Veda back beside it the moment Dr. Bob carried Jock off home with him. The peace of death was already in the quiet chamber—the mystery, the sorrow, the definite setting apart from all further struggle and grief. She thought of all these things as she knelt beside Minette. Mechanically she repeated the prayer for the dead. Mechanically, for in her heart she felt Minette no longer needed praying for. The glorious sacrifice of those few heroic moments had beggared prayer. There was a singing thankfulness running through Veda's grief that Minette had atoned.

She had had almost a mother's love for the girl—almost a mother's awe and admiration for her dainty loveliness, her whimsical sweetness. She had known almost a mother's anguish when these were dragged dishonored. Now, surely, her womanhood shone white again. Jock had seen its shining. Dr. Bob had seen it. One longing ache remained to be satisfied—Garth Hardwick must see it.

The stress of these last dreadful days had drawn them together in an exquisite wordless intimacy. They had worked and planned with scarce a personal reference except for an occasional "Are you very tired?" or "You must stop long enough to get something to eat." But Veda understood now what Hardwick was to her—what she was to Hardwick. And the joy of it was food and drink and sleep through the weary anxious hours. But the wound of his careless words about her friend had never quite healed.

She resented it because of Minette; she resented it because of all women. It was not enough that Hardwick was chivalrously kind to women. He was kind to dumb beasts. She wanted to hear him say that women counted. She

did not want to be merely loved and petted; she did not want to love and be looked up to. She wanted to love, mind to mind, as well as heart to heart. Any other love would turn to bitterness. She wanted all this, but as she knelt this evening and prayed perfunctorily her heart was crying out most for justice for her friend. She could not see the dead girl laid away until Hardwick had done her honor.

While she prayed and thought the door opened and some one came in. She supposed it to be the nurse and did not look up.

Hardwick had trailed her to the hospital. He had bad news for her and he would entrust it to no other messenger. There had been another futile rush on the L. and A. The bolshevists seemed to have a special animus against the works. The death of Bracy Landis and the mortal injury to his wife, the partial destruction of his home, seemed only to have fed their craze for further revenge. They had to be beaten back with cold steel from machine guns this time, and had left many dead behind. Ivan Lapovich was among these.

Hardwick did not yet know precisely what Ivan meant to Veda. He was at any rate her countryman. There must be the remembrance of the old tenderness. His death must come as a blow. Since arriving at the hospital, he had learned of Minette's death. He dreaded to add this other tragedy to Veda's burden of sorrow. Entering the room softly, he came and stood beside her looking down upon the dead.

He had heard more of the details than Veda of Minette's brave effort to protect her husband. He was thinking of her reverently, wondering if human wisdom were ever adequate to judge any man or woman. Then Veda looked up.

She caught the meaning of his expression partly and tried to respond to it.

"She was good—surely you believe that now! And she counted! Her one sin didn't wipe out all the beautiful side of her nature just because she was a woman. Men are unjust—it couldn't! Why, if it could stain a woman past all cleansing, it must stain the man too. Nature made

them of the same flesh and blood, and God breathed into them the same spirit. Don't you see, Garth?" She lifted wet, appealing eyes to search his face.

Her pathetic earnestness hurt him. He took her hands in his and drew her toward him. "Good? Surely, love, no one could look at her peaceful face and decide otherwise. She bore a very heroic and tender soul in that fragile body—we need not remember her mistakes."

He marveled at the sudden irradiation of Veda's face.

"And she did count?" She felt she must exact the utmost of reparation for Minette.

"Count?—I do not quite understand, dear." It was his turn to question her face.

She repeated the forgotten thoughtless speech word for word. He noted the precision with which she imitated his very tones. What an impression it must have made upon her! He studied for slow seconds how best to clean his slate.

"I've been all sorts of a fool, Veda, during my life, but I guess I outdistanced my own record a little when I said that."

"It wasn't the saying," she interposed hastily—"it was the habit of thinking—that a woman didn't count—that—that—her life didn't weigh with the man's. You treated her so lightly—as if she were—an incident merely. What if love had ruined her life? It mustn't be allowed to ruin the man's, Jock's or Bracy Landis'. What is the use of a woman's loving with all there is in her if her love is just an incident in a man's life? It is such a cruel waste!"

Hardwick groaned. He had the man's impulse to settle the matter by protesting his love for her. He was astute enough to realize that this would not clear the trouble from this woman's eyes. She came pretty near the truth in her accusation. He had always thought of love as a limited part of the man's career—a necessity like food and drink, but like food and drink to be kept subservient to the serious work of his life. And he had never been willing to consider the woman except in her love life as wife and mother. He admitted she had been useful during the war, but he had resented her enlarging spheres of activity, hoping

secretly that some reactionary movement would reestablish her old status of dependence before it was everlastingly too late. He knew scores of men who felt the same way.

And he wanted this girl on the old time basis to bear and to rear his children, to keep his house, to bound her interests with his interests. He would not mind her playing Lady Bountiful still at the works. But he wanted her to go silken clad, to sleep softly, to be the woman beautiful and tender of his dreams. More, he wanted her to be wholly content with this. And Veda's lustrous madonna eyes were asking for more—he did not know precisely how much more. She was asking it not alone for herself—she was demanding it for the memory of this dead friend—for all women.

He chose his words. "I count her life as valuable—I regret her loss as deeply as any man's. Will that content you?" He smiled, but his smile was troubled.

She looked at him doubtfully and he took the man's way to convince her because it was the only way he knew. He gathered her into his arms and told her that his love for her was more to him than his whole life, let alone an incident. And she nestled to him and gave him her lips joyfully there—in the presence of the dead. But the troubled look did not go out of her eyes.

The nurse came in. They stood a moment longer beside the iron cot, then went out silently together, threading their way among the cots in the crowded corridor. There were two men from the L. and A. there. Hardwick paused a moment to ask after their comfort.

Hardwick's relation to his workmen had become unbelievably fraternal. The majority of the men at the mills had emerged from the stupefaction of the first day's surprise and terror stripped of all their grumbling sophistries. Class consciousness, the rights of unions, economic equality, were secondary needs. The primary necessities confronting them now were food and safety. They were swept into the same sacrificial spirit of solidarity France had known in '14. It was their bodies in defense of hope and country. And in this crisis Hardwick was no longer their employer, he was their natural leader. They trusted him

because he had been faithful to his own principles; they believed in him because he had never quailed before their threats or malevolence. They enforced his lightest suggestion as if it were a military command. They did more, as Garth learned later, they detailed men daily to shadow and guard him.

The two wounded men in the corridor watched them walk on.

"The boss's all right," said one, "and if he's got the good horse sense I think he has, he'll marry that girl."

Hardwick dissuaded Veda from going back to the works that night, urging that she must have rest. She let him take her to the DeWitts', where she was always welcome, announced or unannounced. On the way he told her about Ivan. She herself was surprised to find how little his going moved her. The realization had been deepened during these last terrible days that the Ivan she had cared for had degenerated into a mercenary agitator. His hands had been stained with more than one crime since the strike began. Death was merciful to stay him from further violence. But she prayed for him more earnestly than she had petitioned for Minette. He surely needed an intercessor.

Strange happenings had disturbed the methodical routine of the DeWitt household. Even John Camberwell had not been proof against the gurgling allurements of Minette's baby. He was caught in the act of chucking it under the chin and smiling at it. To which attentions the ungrateful young sinner responded by grabbing at his eye-glass ribbon to the imminent peril of his cherished glasses. The whole DeWitt family welcomed the baby as a refuge from the strained gloom which had hung over them since the disclosures of the pictures.

That incident was fast dwindling into insignificance in Helen's mind under the strain of her increasing anxiety for Derrick's safety. Her mother had succeeded in restoring the girl's confidence in her father. She was ashamed to have doubted him on such trivial evidence. She felt that she had been inexpressibly young and silly to have let herself drift into so morbid a train of thought. She could not bring herself to open the subject with her father,

but she was striving by unwonted tenderness and endearments to make up to him for her failure in loyalty. John Camberwell was both surprised and delighted at her attitude. He immediately jumped to the conclusion that Margaret had greatly exaggerated the girl's distress. He had constructed too many plausible theories excusing himself for keeping the pictures, to find it difficult to explain away any censure of his act in Helen's mind.

Margaret noticed the sudden revival of tenderness between the two with mingled feelings. She had done her best to restore Helen's trust in her father and she had succeeded apparently beyond her hopes. She had done this, not for him, but for the child's sake. From a chance remark of Helen's she knew nothing had passed between them concerning the matter. She had hoped John would be torn by the same anguished shame she felt for him—that he would face his daughter's condemnation honestly, not trying to invent puerile excuses for his own weakness. Yet she realized instantly that she was inconsistent in this. Such confession on his part would have undone all her own efforts to justify him in Helen's eyes. It would have helped to re-establish her own respect for her husband, but it would have proved his guilt to Helen.

Still she could not stifle a feeling of resentment that he seemed always to come off unscathed from situations of his making which left her humiliated and tremulous. His utter lack of understanding of other people's convictions and emotions protected him like armor from the unpleasantnesses of life. He had come out from this affair with his suave dignity scarcely ruffled. He accepted Helen's caresses as his due. He rather flaunted them in Margaret's face. He was ostentatiously omitting his usual tenderesses toward her. It was his genteel method of convincing her of how very wrong she had been.

Had he any conception of what her feelings toward him were? Had he no feeling of regret that he had so nearly wrecked Helen's life? Possibly he was congratulating himself that he had been unconsciously instrumental in coming between her and Derrick, because he had thus made the more advantageous marriage possible.

Margaret set her jaw with a most unfeminine clamp as this idea suggested itself. If Derrick Martin returned alive there should be a hasty marriage before there was room for further misunderstandings. Dr. Bob had confided to her the tale of the message entrusted to his care. She had permitted herself one revenge upon her husband. She had not told him of the letter Helen had written to Herbert Maldon asking to be released from her engagement, and telling him she had been mistaken in believing the old love dead. The letter and the diamond in pale gold, packed for expressing, were ready for the first safe means of transportation eastward. She did not tell John Camberwell this. And Helen did not tell him because she knew he would try to dissuade her.

All these cross currents of feeling made life difficult at the DeWitts'. When no news of Martin had been heard by dark the preceding evening, all lesser worries were swallowed up for Helen and Margaret in a desperate anxiety for his safety. Helen went from bed to arm chair and from chair to window till her strength gave out, listening to every sound, searching the shadowy street, hoping, praying for the familiar humming of a plane overhead or the sight of Dr. Bob's runabout approaching. He had promised to apprise her at the earliest possible moment of any news of Derrick.

When the doctor did come the following morning, it was not with the hoped-for news, but with Minette's baby and the tidings of the tragic events of the night at the Landis home. The child saved Helen from a breakdown. But the hours dragged by like a dirge and there was still no news. Once late in the afternoon she thought she heard a plane. Later, she learned one had come in, but it was not the government machine which Derrick had taken out.

Twilight had long since fallen when her attention was attracted by a stir in the street outside. Some one was going to the door downstairs. She hurriedly opened the window and glanced out. A covered machine that looked like an ambulance in the uncertain light stood in the street

before the house. What did it mean? Were they bringing Minette to them also?

The Church hospital where Jock had left Martin was as badly overcrowded as the others, but common humanity would not permit the turning away of a patient in these days of extremity. But the sadly overworked chief surgeon held that a little finesse was still admissible. When he had set Derrick's broken shoulder and had seen him dropping off into the deep sleep of the physically exhausted, with temperature going down and local inflammation measurably reduced, he recalled to mind that he had promised to notify Miss Helen DeWitt of the patient's safety and present condition.

He hated to spare even a messenger for the service. The ambulance driving into the court at this precise minute gave his thoughts a new turn. Mr. Martin was in no dangerous state. He merely needed good nursing and a little surgical supervision for a time. Why not please Miss DeWitt and relieve the unbearably congested ward at the hospital by sending Mr. Martin in person to announce his safe arrival? The surgeon was not one to concern himself about the doings of local society, but he remembered to have heard some months ago that Mr. Martin was Miss DeWitt's fiancé. He knew Mrs. DeWitt personally. Any one confided to her charge would be properly cared for. He was positive of that. The new idea grew upon him.

He summoned the orderlies and a trusted nurse and five minutes later Mr. Derrick Martin, still peacefully slumbering, was transferred to the ambulance and some fifteen minutes later, under the superintendence of the nurse, was carried into the DeWitt home by the same orderlies.

The feelings of the household over this unexpected guest were decidedly mixed. Helen was tearfully rapturous and supposed—wondering much in the supposing—that Derrick must have asked for her insistently to make the surgeon take such a step. John Camberwell called the surgeon's act an outrageous liberty. He was utterly dismayed at this turn in events, but one could hardly turn away an unconscious wounded man from one's doors in

such a crisis, even supposing that Helen had not been present to weep and rejoice hysterically over him, as one brought back from the tomb for her express benefit. John Camberwell DeWitt was sadly upset.

He remonstrated with her excess of emotion as most unbecoming when she was engaged to another man. Helen held up her bare hand gleefully.

"I'm not, Daddy, I'm not. I've written to him and sent back his ring."

John Camberwell's face took on a sickly hue. He loved his daughter, but he had been building air castles on her brilliant prospects for months. This dream of her future state had compensated him subtly for the unacknowledged failure of his own life. He had not wished her to sacrifice her happiness. He took it for granted that with a young, attractive, and tender husband, love would follow the marriage relation, if it did not precede it. John Camberwell believed so implicitly in the divine right of established institutions that he did not admit even nature's right to rebel against them. Of course a man's fancy might wander off after strange gods—a little latitude was to be expected here, but a well brought up girl—never!

But he loved Helen and her ecstatic joy over Derrick was not to be ignored. He could not bring himself to reproach her for breaking this new bond as was his first impulse. Instead, he walked slowly into his own room and closed the door. He sat down in his arm chair heavily. Never before had he so fully realized that he was getting to be an old man. He had never considered his wife's personality as apart from his own. He had never thought of his daughter's interests as possibly antagonistic to his own. Now, in his declining years they were both indubitably parted from him. He savored this new thought bitterly. Bitterly, through long hours of the night. But he could not bring himself to own that any fault of his had contributed to the isolation in which he found himself. To impair his own self-respect by such an admission, would have deprived him of the courage to face life. His negative egoism was to his soul what the red corpuscles were

to his body. He would be spiritually anaemic without it. So he suffered, but he suffered as the injured, not as the injuring.

In the adjoining room Helen had watched the nurse settle Derrick for the night. He roused a trifle but did not seem to take any notice of his new surroundings. The nurse gave Mrs. DeWitt careful instructions and took her departure. Margaret insisted that Helen should go to bed and be fresh to greet him in the morning. The nurse had said he would probably wake quite himself except for a little pain in the shoulder. Helen was still arguing that she couldn't possibly sleep a wink, when Veda and Hardwick arrived, and Helen flew down to sob out her joy on Veda's shoulder to Hardwick's amazement.

He was glad Martin seemed to be coming into his own again, but Helen's mental processes were beyond him. He looked at Veda worshipfully but with that same trouble he had read in hers registered in his own eyes. In spite of their mutual affection had they two quite arrived at a mutual understanding? He was beginning to realize that perhaps marriage is a state where room must be made for two personalities so distinct that not even the old magical alchemy of love can transfuse them into a golden unit bearing the stamp of the male.

Derrick Martin awoke about nine A.M. the following morning weak but feeling remarkably fit on the whole. His first mental efforts were directed toward deciding where in thunder he was and how he got there. He thought he remembered somebody's picking him up and their arriving at the Church hospital, though everything seemed a little vague. But this was not the hospital! His eyes roved from the softly tinted walls to the lace and silver of Helen's dressing table. "The hospital? Lord, no!" He noted curiously as much of the room's furnishing as he could from his recumbent position. He liked the look of this woman's stuff—made him think of his mother—and Helen. Come to think of it the place was sort of like Helen. There was a photograph in a silver

frame standing on the little writing desk but it was slanted away from him. Looked like a man's picture. Something vaguely familiar about that, too.

At the cost of sundry twinges from his shoulder he writhed a little to one side where he could get a better view of it. He was confronted by his own photograph re-instated in its ancient place of honor had he but known it—on the evening he set out on the governor's mission. He did not question any further as to his whereabouts after recognizing it. He was perfectly well aware to whom he had given that photograph. But the question of how he came to be there was even more pertinent than it had been. The house seemed very quiet, he noticed. He began to listen for every sound, particularly footsteps. He heard a door close down stairs—that was all.

He put up his hand to his chin and was appalled at his unshaven state. He hoped his face was clean. He examined his hands for affirmative evidence. They were pretty badly scared and scratched but soap and water were evidently not unknown to them. But the question of how he came into Helen's room was troubling. Surely, they had not brought him here to disappoint—had the doctor, the old rascal, delivered his letter before he should? These meditations were shortly disturbed by a door opening below and a step on the stair. A dancing step as of some one bubbling, springing, skipping fairly, up the stairs.

Martin grew warmer and warmer as the footsteps drew nearer. There was the faintest knock. Martin's "Come in" came out strong. The door was pushed softly open and Helen came, blushing, paling, but radiant from her coppery gleaming hair to the hem of her crisp buff morning dress.

He did not waste any time demanding explanations. And the joy of his "Sweetheart!" was all the explanation Helen wanted. She flew to him in a passion of tears and smiles. They really did not get down to explanations till that afternoon, because Derrick promptly satisfied his Nellen that they were so badly in arrears in their love-

making after these months of estrangement that it was a duty to catch up on this first.

And Margaret came bearing the breakfast tray—and Veda to rejoice over his safety, and the world took on a new hue for Derrick. But John Camberwell had gone early to his office where there was no possibility of transacting business till the bolshevists were entirely suppressed. It is one of the sorrowful things of existence as we know it, that one man's meat is so often the bread of sorrow or humiliation to another. If we had the ordering of life could we better it?

After Derrick had had another sleep, Margaret came in the waning afternoon light and displaced Helen. She had to tell him why Helen had shrunk from him though she loved him. It was not an easy task. She did not mince matters but she made to him the strongest defense of her husband she could. If she spoke a little less convincingly than to Helen, it was because she knew he knew men, and had suffered too deeply to judge with a daughter's leniency. But she pleaded John's case with a dignified earnestness that touched Derrick with its pathetic control. Eyes and tones also begged him not to judge Helen's father.

He would not let her finish. "Mater dear, forget it! There isn't a man living who doesn't have something on his slate he would like to wipe off. Men don't have a fighting chance to think normally on the subject of sex, however well-intentioned they may be, because the morbid and the debased are continually covering the subject with slime. He was just trying to be a sport, Mater, that was all. Just rebelling a little against growing old!"

Derrick laughed easily but the hand beneath the covers was clenched. "His Nellen—his poor little Nellen! God!" His fingers itched to exact reparation.

Margaret was watching him, lifting punished eyes to search his face for his innermost thought. And he was a little weak to play a rôle convincingly. He looked past her out the window trying to achieve a completer control before he spoke again.

He decided to take up the other phase of the subject.

"Poor little girl! It is easy to understand how she felt. She did credit to your ideals in being shocked—if I had only dreamed—I puzzled so—I—but why speak of it further, young girls can't understand some things, can they, Mother dear? And, Mater, I promise you that our little girl shall not suffer through me—God being my helper." His voice broke a little.

Margaret patted him and smiled through blurring eyes.

After Nellen said good night that evening, she lingered a moment looking down at her lover with a slightly puzzled pucker to her brows.

"Well?" he interrogated smilingly. "What has my lady of dreams on her mind now?"

"Nothing—only—"

"Only what, dear?"

"Oh, only just—that you're so sort of tenderly tender to-night."

"I meant to be—thank you for noticing it. You see it's till death us do part—this time, Nellen."

She echoed slowly and softly. "Till death us do part." She cherished the thought for a precious moment, then the words seemed to detach themselves from any relation to herself and Derrick and to form again around her mother and father. Those marriage words were the link there—and they had held. Only last night she had noticed how worn and loose her mother's wedding ring had become. Mummy had worn that ring a long time—a long time—and she had not cared. Helen could hardly place this thought. It did not seem to have any possible niche in the even family affection she had always known. To be sure she could not conceive her father as ever caring in the tragic way that Derrick cared. And this thought offered an explanation. A generation ago young people had been more controlled—the training of the Victorian era did not countenance passion—it was not good form, ergo they did not feel quite so exuberantly as their hotter blooded twentieth century offspring. She went back and said good night once more to Derrick to prove to herself conclusively that her mother never could have under any circumstances been quite such a fool over—no, not over

any young Lochinvar of the early nineties, be he ever so gallant.

John Camberwell kissed his wife forgivingly that night. And when Margaret heard his departing footsteps on the stairs, she turned to look after him with a queer patient smile. "It's a funny old world!" she murmured, "a funny old world! But it is the best we've got and I guess we'll have to put up with it!" And Margaret DeWitt shrugged her shoulders for something more than the thousandth time and decided to have codfish balls for breakfast because "John was fond of them."

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE NEW HOPE

WHEN the harassed inhabitants of Capitol City woke up one elysian morning to the luxury of a daily paper and the glorious news that the last of the local bolshevist leaders was safely behind prison bars, they suddenly discovered that April was merging rapidly into May. The fruit trees were groaning with bloom, irises showed purple lines along garden borders, robins were already pre-empting cherry orchards and all nature had been making merry for days to deaf ears. The city poured itself outdoors to make up for the time lost to anarchy.

Capitol City's experience had been the general one, but thanks to prompt and firm action by national and local authorities and the loyalty of the masses of labor roused at last, America had once more vindicated its democracy. The saviors of their country at the Annex café discussed the question pro and con for the remainder of the summer. One wiseacre summed up the popular opinion in pithy vernacular: "Americans are the darndest fools on the face of the earth but they have a come back like greased lightning."

But Americans were not likely to forget this lesson for a generation. The strike had been too nearly universal. Too many lives had been lost, too much property destroyed, the whole economic machinery of the country had actually been stopped—if only temporarily. And fear had walked the length and breadth of the land as it had never walked before, even when the dread of savage massacres lay heavy on the pioneers. For this was a terror beside their very hearth stones. It was a terror fostered in their own university halls. It was a terror nursed from repulsive germs not alone by the ignorant but by the enlightened. Repre-

sentative magazines had propagated it zealously under such standard names as democracy, free speech, the progressive spirit. Great editors had written defenses of its hideousness trying to prove that this toadstool men knew as bolshevism on the continent, would turn out the finest variety of mushroom if once transplanted to the fertile soil of great America.

But now men saw that it bred true to type, as malignant germs have a way of doing.

But while Capitol City basked in spring sunshine and spring perfumes and eagerly set the wheels of business to humming again, its citizens were doing more sober thinking than was their wont. For once their easy-going faith that the affairs of the nation would take care of themselves, while the individual citizen expended all his energies taking care of himself, had received a rude shock. The nation had come pretty near slipping a cog. It seemed reasonable that reforms were needed and that it might be the duty of the individual citizen to do a little thinking for himself, instead of leaving it to "those wiser." Possibly, after all, statesmen were mere men with cupidities and stupidities even as other men.

The average citizen kept these sprouting convictions to himself, but the state legislators, whose labors had been so rudely interrupted by the bolshevists, reconvened in a more public spirited temper than any similar body in Capitol City had ever assembled. Private interest did not loom so big as usual; public weal loomed bigger.

The "Old Guard," as Dr. Bob called the little coterie of supporters of the Erb Act, set to work confidently but soberly. The special session hoped to finish its work in five days.

"I believe it is going all right," said Margaret, "but the members are so much less talkative than usual. They seem afraid to open their mouths either for or against."

"Still afraid there might be a bolshevist behind the next pillar," suggested Derrick who was out again though with his shoulder still in splints.

"We may find that something of an obstacle, too," said Dr. Bob, worrying his accustomed cigar. "The crowd

are scared to death of anything savoring of radicalism even though they see the need of reforms as never before. They are going to grip all their old institutions tighter than ever after this fright. I expect to witness such a revival of church going as will delight the hearts of the discouraged clergy. We looked for it in the spiritual revival following the war, but we seemed to have a revival of idealism which did not express itself to any considerable extent in religious observance. But now that the very institution of the church has been threatened, people realize that they would be badly off without it."

"Which admission from a free-thinker is going some—rather," retorted Derrick with a smile.

"Not at all," affirmed the doctor, "because I am a *free-thinker* I realize that the agencies that meet my spiritual needs are not adequate for everybody else. I pick my tidbits of Christianity out of our Christian civilization in preference to getting the doctrines in gobs from some particular service or religious official. Others prefer the more direct method. Why quarrel with each other so long as we don't destroy each other's spiritual supplies? But I repeat the value of institutions has risen since our late unpleasantness."

"Even the 'oldest profession,' you think?" asked Martin.

"I wouldn't go so far as to assert that, but our more cautious citizens may be afraid to disturb the *status quo* of anything that has the sanction of long custom. We need to look out—that's all."

"I believe that very fear will help us," said Derrick who had been listening thoughtfully, "just because bolshevism has become associated not only with immorality but with brutal immorality. Men are beginning to see that instinct and lust are not necessarily synonymous. And while the latter may be very amusing in fiction it is an unpleasant neighbor. We should all prefer to have such 'incorruptible souls' as Jean Christophe safely behind bars in a mental hospital until they part company with their too corruptible flesh."

"That reminds me," said Dr. Bob, "that we shall probably lose one vote we had counted on, Webber from Land

County. You heard about his daughter? It was one of the saddest things that has happened. Beautiful girl of eighteen, I remember seeing her here with him at the beginning of the session. She was kidnapped by a man whose attentions she had refused, a brutal chap who had turned bolshevist. She escaped after a few days—and found her way home to die. Only child—think of it! The old man is probably too much broken by the blow to finish up the session.”

Margaret clenched her hands. “I don’t see how he could stay away!” she protested.

Dr. Bob smiled at her. “That’s another way of looking at it. I rather think I’d feel that way myself. But we don’t want to be over-confident. We must work till the last minute.”

So the old guard worked, and the women’s organizations of the city worked, and the religious organizations came this time into the campaign whole-heartedly. Bolshevism had taught them what license meant. An outcast class was not so necessary an evil when your own daughter might so easily be forced into it. To insist that prostitution was necessary as a protection to society was virtually to exonerate Germany’s infamy toward the Belgian and French women. If it was a human necessity then the women engaged in it were benefactors not vampires. The church was fast coming to realize that to place the woman’s body at the disposal of man, was to put the man at the mercy of his own lust. In so doing, society invited the beast—spread a table to lure it to cast aside the bonds of spirit, then mourned demurely because the creature fattened. The church at least must concede that the woman’s beauty was sacred to love and life—not something to be bartered for profit or worldly position—not something with which to buy indulgence or family peace—not something to be yielded in fear or at the behest of religion. If society could safeguard property against man’s lust, it could safeguard the sources of human life.

But human prejudice dies hard. Garth Hardwick admitted this grimly to himself. He had come to believe that this proposed law to suppress immorality as a business

was well worth trying out. Whenever you admitted that physical necessity excused lawlessness you opened the door to all lawlessness. And a lawlessness that was profitable, that had become a paying business, made converts for itself—tended to propagate itself eternally. It changed the problem of human weakness into the more baffling one of weakness plus greed, as Dr. Bob had once declared.

Hardwick was more than willing now to see this law tried out. He was willing to use his personal influence as well as his money. But he was not willing to have the future Mrs. Hardwick mixed up in another unsavory campaign. He hated to have Veda's name associated with it. He hated it all the more because he knew his marriage with one of the L. and A. employees would set tongues to wagging. He clung to the old chivalrous fetich of keeping the woman's name from the lips of the public. He still disliked the woman's participation in public affairs. And Veda knew he disliked it.

She put the matter up to him frankly. "Garth, I know you don't like to have me in this, and I hate to go against your judgment, but it is my duty, Garth. I can't give up my duty even to win your approbation. It isn't that I like to do this work—but I can do it—it's my opportunity to help my sisters and"—her voice faltered—"to expiate my failure—to her. Why, I should be a traitor if I deserted now. Don't you see?"

Hardwick twisted his mouth into the semblance of a smile. "I see, but I don't want to. I guess you're tied up in this hard and fast—go ahead, dear, but I'm going to ask you to give up these public stunts after we are married."

Veda looked up quickly. "You don't mean that, surely, Garth."

"Yes, Veda, I do. I can give you plenty of useful occupation in our home and in mothering the L. and A. girls still, if you please, but I don't want my wife figuring in movements—however praise-worthy they may be." Hardwick looked at her steadily. He hated to make this issue but with his feeling in the matter it was the only fair thing to do.

Veda returned his gaze, lovingly, sorrowfully. "But I can't promise that, Garth."

"Why?" his voice was a bit thick.

"For the same reason you would not promise to refuse to serve your country if you were needed. I can't drop my responsibilities as a citizen and a woman when I become a wife. You have no right to ask that." Her eyes were the troubled madonna eyes he loved.

Hardwick had been used to working out his plans and his will in the face of opposition. He had spent thirty-six years at the business. But he had never had to contend with his own emotions before. He was stubborn and his pride was hurt by her refusal. He loved her for her strong unselfish character, but he had not anticipated having both these virtues turned against himself.

"Suppose you let me shoulder those responsibilities when they make demands outside the home—my shoulders are broad." He smiled again, but the man's every muscle was taut for a struggle. He wanted her reverently with all that was best in him, but he wanted her for his own—to have and to hold against the world. He wanted her duty to him and to his children, if they should be blessed with them, to be paramount, even as her love for him was paramount.

Veda shook her head sorrowfully. "No, I'm a grown person—I can't go back into the carelessness of childhood. I know some women do—I know lots of men think women ought to do that. But I'm not that sort—I—I—wish I could be for your sake." Her eyes were slowly filling with tears.

Would the time never come when the woman could be a wife without sacrificing her dignity and rights as a human being? She did not crave economic independence; though she knew it had done much for women; she had no great interest in suffrage, but she must be free to be herself, judge of what was right and wrong for her individual self, accountable to her God and to all men for her acts, not to her husband alone. She was willing that he should dictate in all economic matters, she would be thankful to sacrifice her own personal convenience to him. That

would be love's privilege. But to surrender the control of her conduct—of her capabilities for usefulness, to his deciding. No, she had no right to do such a thing! Love that asked such a price was not love; it was man's love of possession.

Hardwick's face was darkening. Direct opposition always antagonized him. Veda could have coaxed him into acquiescence, he would have enjoyed being wheedled, but Veda was not that type of woman. She was too frankly honest and honorable to conduct her life on any such principles. She would willingly yield all minor things, but the big issues of life must be met by the man and the woman squarely, without fear or favor—even as among men who disagree.

"Veda, don't you love me?" He made the old subtle appeal that cuts the woman to the quick, and makes weak natures betray life for love.

Veda was not weak, but she had ample capacity for suffering. She made no attempt to reply. Hardwick's face told her the case was beyond argument. He was bent on making it a clash of wills, and he expected hers to go down before his. She wanted to yield. She was so hungry for love; so weary with the tragedy of life. His power, his kindness, his humorous indomitable grip on affairs kindled her imagination. He was a prince among men in her eyes. She felt he had stooped to love her and his love was like an accolade. But her self respect was more necessary even than love. This was but another phase of the old battle she had waged with Ivan.

Hardwick came a step nearer. "Veda, little girl, this isn't much to ask, surely. You shall have a free hand in the home—I promise you shall queen it to your heart's content, but I don't want my wife mixing up in politics. I don't want to come home and find you off at committee meetings or clubs. It is because I love you so much, dear. I am jealous of your having outside interests. Your whole life has been given up to serving others. You have earned the right to rest and love and home." He put his arm about her shoulders, and cupping her chin in his palm, looked long into her eyes.

She was pliant to his touch. She wanted with all her soul to give him everything that he wanted, but her personality was not hers to give. It was a trust from deity to be accounted for by her individually. His love must learn to make room for her responsibilities. She gave him her eyes through her tears so long as he wanted to look. But he read her wordless answer readily enough.

He came near cursing this mysterious woman nature that was so plastic and so unyielding in the selfsame moment. Garth Hardwick lost his sense of humor for the next few seconds but he succeeded in controlling himself.

He loosed his hold on her and turned away. "Perhaps we'd better take this up some other time, dear. I—I can't seem to get your point of view. I—oh, damn it all, Veda, why are you so stubborn!" He swung round and gripped her in his arms.

A truce was declared once more.

When Jock Landis came to Margaret DeWitt the morning of the day the legislature was to take up the revamped Erb Bill for final action, and offered to do anything in his power to help along, she was too amazed for an instant to command her wits. Then she remembered Mr. Bracy Landis' understanding with the senator from the third district. She explained as delicately as possible. If he would hunt up this gentleman and give him to understand that the Landis interests and the L. and A. were no longer fighting this bill, it might help tremendously. Jock readily agreed.

"I have never seen such a change in a human being in so short a time in my whole life," she remarked to Derrick in telling him about the incident later in the day. "To think of devil-may-care Jock Landis going in for public reform!"

"Oh, a saint is only a sinner turned inside out. Poor chap, I'm sorry for him from the bottom of my heart. How are he and the doctor making it with a ménage ensemble?"

"So beautifully that the doctor will be a very lonely man when Jock gets his home into shape again and takes the baby away. I don't think Dr. Bob just dotes on the

trained nurse in his happy home—he has a surfeit of nurse's society in his profession—but he would put up with anything for the sake of the youngster."

"And Jock—does he dote on the child or—"

"Sits off and eyes it mostly when anybody's round, but has been caught making love to it on the sly, Bob says. You know he has come out flatly and acknowledged the child. He speaks of it as 'my son,' without camouflage or explanation. Oh, he's perfectly fine—what a pity it took all this tragedy to bring him out."

"It's the eternal pity of life, Mater." His mind had wandered from Jock to his own close shave from losing happiness. "By the way, Mother-in-law—how does it seem to know you are going to have to acknowledge a graceless son-in-law in less than ten days' time?"

"Beautiful, since you're it, Son. Helen is going up to the capitol with us this afternoon in spite of all her dewdads. She says she intends to be in at the death this time."

"I sure hope we'll make a killing!"

The line up of sympathizers with the measure was fairly complete, Dr. Bob noted as he slipped into the senate gallery. Once more the contest was in the senate. The house had passed it that morning with a slightly increased majority over the former vote.

Jock Landis was sitting with Derrick beside Margaret and Helen DeWitt. The opposite side was packed almost solid with delegations from the women's clubs of the city and state. The interest in the measure had spread from one end of the state to the other.

"It's merely a matter of advertising," Derrick explained. "People always want to climb into the band wagon when they're sure it is ready to start."

Margaret was scanning the faces of the members beneath her.

"Why, there's Mr. Webber! He wasn't here yesterday. I inquired. He's the man from Land County we were talking about the other day," she explained to Helen. "Dear me, I wonder how he stands."

Derrick was focussing his eyes upon him. "Poor old

duffer, he looks as if he had been wrung dry!" he remarked after a careful survey. "Do you suppose the old lady beside him is his wife? I saw one of the pages bring her a chair. See, he is looking out for her mighty carefully."

The senate was called to order. The little group watched the procedure anxiously. Everything seemed to be going about as they had expected till the president of the senate announced that if there were no further discussion they would proceed to vote.

Helen had previously called her mother's attention to a little by-play between Mr. Webber and the old woman beside him. She had been nudging him at intervals for several minutes. Once or twice she whispered something, but he invariably shook his head. Now, he suddenly rose to his feet and addressed the chair awkwardly.

His lumbering stooped figure leaned a little against his desk as if for support. His long iron gray hair, carefully brushed, framed a face even grayer. It was a face from which all joy seemed to have fled. Helen glanced from him to the old woman beside him. Her hands in their neat black silk gloves were working nervously. Her eyes were fixed in a wrapt attention upon Mr. Webber.

Margaret was watching her, too. "She is his wife," she whispered, "you can tell by her expression. I wonder what it all means."

"Hush, Mother, he's speaking."

His voice seemed to be coming from a long way off at first. He kept clearing his throat and moistening his mouth with his tongue. Presently he seemed to gain a little better command of himself. His voice was low—husky, but he spoke slowly and could be plainly heard. There had been a perceptible movement of surprise when he rose. His pitiful story was generally known and the sympathy was universal.

"I ain't much of a speaker. I guess most of you ain't never heard me from this floor before. But I got something I feel it my duty to say before you vote on this question. I guess you all know it was hard for me to come here. I wouldn't a come if I hadn't a thought it was my Chris-

tian duty. Mother and I talked it over and we allowed there was times when human feelings had to be set aside. I came here to say a word about this here bill—I've done a sight of thinkin' about things since—lately. And I think maybe I see some things clearer than I used ter. I don't mind tellin' you that I only voted for this measure last session because Mother here kinder set her heart on it. I didn't calculate it was goin' to do much good, but I didn't see as it could do much harm. But I see different now." He paused a moment and seemed to be searching for words.

"There's a heap of things in life we kinder take for granted cause we've always been used to havin' 'em. Some's good like sunshine and flowers and having a government to protect you,"—his voice broke traitorously here. "And it don't never occur to us to give thanks for 'em till an earthquake or an uprisin' comes along to show us how awful things would be if we didn't have 'em. But we get just as used to the bad things like measles and crooked politics and—this here business of prostitution. We get so used to 'em we get in the way of thinkin' there's nothin' to be done but worry along with them and kind of cover 'em up the best we can. And we scrape on this way till somebody who can see a little further in front of his nose than the rest of us, shows us how to change 'em.

"And we ain't none too keen about improvin' things even when we're shown. Seems like we have to be coaxed or shoved into doing anything, specially where the wimmen's concerned. Seems to be a little harder to get men to loosen up their ideas about wimmen than any other created thing. I don't know when men started the notion that the wimmen had to be decent for the whole caboodle because men was just so naturally cussed they couldn't be decent. I don't know who started this notion or where, but it's been mighty popular. And it's worked out about as you'd expect. Human natur most generally does do 'bout what people expect of it, I notice. If you don't expect much of Johnny, you don't get much. And if you tell the men you'll have to excuse 'em cause they're men, you will have plenty of excusin' to do till Gabriel sounds

his horn. We don't aim to do no excusin' if a man kills or steals; we clap him into jail. And no matter how mad they get or how much they covet other people's property, the great majority manages to keep clear of jail. But we ain't never felt no call to excuse the women. We've fixed things for them pretty much to suit ourselves. We ain't put 'em in jail much, we've done worse. We've tried to fling 'em on the scrap heap if they made one tiny little mistake. I guess wimmen's got some human natur same's the man. We ain't never encouraged 'em to talk about it none, but I reckon some of them find it pretty hard to be good all the time. And we ain't never been honest with 'em. When we made 'em more decent than men, we wasn't pleased cause the scrap heap wasn't big enough, so we took to buyin' 'em, bridin' 'em not to be pure the way we said we wanted 'em to be. We took precious good care to keep our own out of the way of harm, but we didn't feel no call to worry about the other fellow's daughter."

The old man gave a gulp and stiffened himself a little. His wife gripped the desk and held it tightly, and her lined face worked piteously but she did not break down.

"Mother used to harp on that when we was sitting back being neutral whilst the Boches was doing their hellish deeds among the wimmen and girls over in France and Belgium. She said Heaven'd punish us for bein' so indifferent. And she said right then we was doing hellish things to wimmen right over here in America. I wouldn't listen then, but—but—" His powerful features were convulsed for an instant but he was made of stern stuff. "I've had my lesson. I pray God none of you will ever have. We can't go on saying men can't help bein' brutes and then expect 'em to act human. And we've got to think a little more about the wimmen's side of things. I guess the good Lord didn't make 'em beautiful and comfortin' to have 'em flung on no scrap heap. I don't allow he thought up puttin' obey in the marryin' contract. I don't believe he meant us to treat 'em like children or servants or angels. I calculate he thought he was makin' something a little extra choice in human bein's. As I told you, I ain't much on speakin'—but I come here to-day to ask

you all to give the women a little squarer deal. I ask you to vote for this measure—maybe it ain't perfect—maybe it won't work out the way we're a hopin', but let's try it. I ask you all in the memory of my—little—girl—to help pass this law to keep human skunks from temptin' wimmen to go wrong with money and presents—to keep them as has lost their decency from temptin' our sons to go wrong. Stop and think, it might be your son—it might be your daughter, they'll get next. We've got to get the men as well as the women to thinkin' they can be decent, before this world will be a safe place to live in. God's a lookin' down on us, brothers, will you help make a start to-day?"

He sank into his chair and buried his face in his hands. His wife patted his bent gray head gently with the tears rolling down her face in streams.

It took several seconds for the president to recover his normal train of thought sufficiently to go on with the vote. The Erb Act was passed by a majority of five.

Hardwick had brought Veda and sat beside her. He was very quiet as they bowled smoothly back to the L. and A. in his new car. Veda wondered what he thought of Webber's speech. But she had learned to respect Garth's silent moods. He did not open his mouth till they reached Dormitory No. 2 and he handed her out.

"I guess, little girl, we'll drop that request of mine about your giving up all your outside work—we'll just rule it out of order. I suspect if I can't make up my mind to let my wife have the same privileges I claim for myself, I'm not fit to have a wife."

The book of Genesis, a document somewhat discredited historically by the present generation, but which still has great vogue, states definitely that God created man in his own image, male and female, created he them. Whether this is a mere fairy tale of creation or a divinely inspired allegorical putting of the beginning of the human race, the idea persists throughout the greater part of the world that man was created in some sense in the image of God. We have never satisfied ourselves as to how, or why, or to what end. Mankind has never agreed as to who or what

God is. Materialism has denied his existence. Christian Science has denied the existence of evil. And the controversy ran high over these negations. In the midst of these disputes the world went to war. It wrestled in that titanic struggle with powers outside itself, and it came out from that carnage pretty thoroughly convinced that evil was a sufficiently tangible entity to need constant guarding against and also that the only satisfying human happiness was to be found in acting as if there were a God.

We are practically back to the biblical proposition: God created man in his own image—male and female created he them. Not woman in purity, and man in license. Not man the ruler, and woman the ruled. Not unequal because of their difference, rather equal because of their common humanity. It was left to man himself to propound the Woman Question.





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